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The Burnage Report and Public Representations of Antiracism in Education

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**“A Case-Book of Malign Consequences”: The Burnage Report and
Public Representations of Antiracism in Education**

by

Ralph de Smit

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
Faculty of Education
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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the circulation and reproductive impact of public representations of the Burnage Report, a document which loomed large in the public debates in Britain on the issue of antiracism policies in schools in the late 1980s. Emanating from an inquiry into a student's murder at Manchester's Burnage High School, the Report was held up in much of the British press as having concluded that antiracism policies were a blameworthy factor in the murder. Such conclusions were contested by the authors of the Report, who maintained that racism, not antiracism, was the primary factor in the murder.

Making use of methodologies and analyses derived from the fields of Cultural Studies and Critical Discourse Analysis, this thesis examines the apparent disjuncture between the Report and its representations, comparing a "preferred reading" of the Report with press readings, and analyzing the discursive sources of press representations of antiracism. Also examined are the representations of the Report in the subsequent academic production on antiracism, in order to ascertain the impact of press representations on understandings of the Report's significance.

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1

Introduction

In May 1987 an inquiry was convened at Longsight Library in southeast Manchester, England, charged with investigating the specific circumstances surrounding the murder of a thirteen year old student at one of the city's schools eight months earlier. Ahmed Iqbal Ullah had been stabbed to death in the playground of Burnage High School, not far from Longsight Library. His killer was Darren Coulburn, also a thirteen year old student at the same school. Ullah had been a popular student at Burnage, athletic, and a member of the school's soccer team. Coulburn was a troubled boy, a school bully, and continually in trouble with either his school or the local police. On 15 September, 1986, Ullah had intervened in Coulburn's bullying of a younger and smaller student. A physical confrontation ensued, in which Ullah had the upper hand. After school on the following day after there was a further fight between the two, in the park adjacent to the school, in which Ullah was again the winner. On the morning of 17 September the school playground was the scene of a third scuffle between the two boys, watched

by numerous other students, some of whom urged the two on. But this time Coulburn produced a knife, stabbing Ullah once in the stomach. Ullah was pronounced dead at hospital some forty minutes later (Macdonald et al 1989: 13-16).

Beyond the impact of the tragedy on the Ullah family, on Ahmed's friends and on the school community, the murder had wider repercussions in Manchester. In the days following the murder the school and the local education authority (LEA) declared that Ullah had died because of racism. The Manchester police denied that racism had been a factor. The Greater Manchester Bangladeshi Association (GMBA) called on the Manchester City Council to hold an inquiry to ascertain whether racism had played a role in the tragedy, and the Council acquiesced. By October 1986 it had appointed London barrister Ian Macdonald to chair such an inquiry (Macdonald et al 1989: 82).

The inquiry which convened in Longsight six months later was unusual in several respects. It had no judicial powers and could not therefore subpoena witnesses. The Manchester police refused to cooperate. Although originally intended to be a public inquiry, sessions were conducted in private in order to encourage witnesses to come forward. The terms of reference, which beyond the particulars of the murder, charged the inquiry to look into the extent of racism and racist violence within Manchester schools in general, and to make recommendations for reducing racism and violence in schools, had been generated through consultations between inquiry chair Macdonald and local community groups. Similar consultations had led to decisions about procedure and the membership of the inquiry panel which, as would be subsequently emphasized, was made up of four people with solid antiracist credentials. Chair Macdonald was an expert on– and critical of– restrictive British immigration laws, and was

known as something of a crusading lawyer, taking on deportation and other civil rights cases. His co-panelists were Lily Khan, a London community activist and a former member of the Commission for Racial Equality; Gus John, a sociologist, educator and founder of the Black Parents Movement; and Reena Bhavnani, a sociologist and consultant on issues relating to education and gender. When the panel was introduced, the comment was heard that with “one left-wing lawyer and three blacks” leading the inquiry, “you could write the report now” (Roberts 1988: 14).

In the event, the fate of The Report of the Macdonald Inquiry into Racism and Racial Violence in Manchester Schools— which came to be popularly known as “The Burnage Report”— also proved to be somewhat unusual. Having heard evidence through the spring and summer of 1987, the inquiry panel spent the following three months writing its report, submitting an initial draft to the Manchester City Council in January 1988. The Council repeatedly postponed publication of the report, and finally announced in April that it would not publish at all, citing potentially libelous elements in the report. On April 25 a local paper, the *Manchester Evening News*, acquired and published the report’s concluding chapter summarizing the inquiry’s findings and recommendations. Over the next few days all the major British national daily papers carried items on the leak of the Report and its contents. These items cast a surprising light on the Macdonald Inquiry’s findings. The initial news reports and leading articles either implied or explicitly stated that the Burnage Report blamed antiracist policies at Burnage High School for Ahmed Ullah’s death, that these policies had created volatile racial tensions at the school, resulting in violence and murder (see, for example, *Times* 27 Apr 1988*a* and *b*; *Guardian* 27 Apr 1988; see also Macdonald, et al 1989: xvii-xxi; and Gordon 1989). Burnage suddenly

became a national issue and over the next few months the national press continued to run related articles, reports, opinion pieces and editorials on the matter, including subsequent events at the school, the struggle to get the Report published, and the issue of antiracism in education.

The national press allotted far less attention to a press release, followed by a press conference, in which the members of the inquiry panel claimed that the print media had misrepresented their Report and denied that their findings implicated Burnage's antiracism policies in Ahmed Ullah's death. While acknowledging that the Report was critical of Burnage's antiracist policies, the press release said such criticism was limited to the ineffectuality of these policies and their failure to address the atmosphere of racism and violence at the school (the complete text of the press release is included in the introductory materials of the published version of the Report, Macdonald, et al 1989: *xxi - xxiv*).

This relatively unpublicized dispute between the inquiry panel and the British national press about the content of the Burnage Report raises, at minimum, the question of what was actually in the Report. Moreover, if the content of the Report was substantially different from its public representations in the press, what factors might account for this, and what were the effects and consequences of these representations on perceptions of the Report's meaning and significance? Such questions are important in light of the fact that the Burnage Report is widely seen in the academic literature on antiracism as pivotal in what has been described as a crisis in antiracism which prevailed throughout most of the 1990s in Britain.

This crisis is generally seen to be reflected in a widespread retreat from public activism into introspection and revisionism, and as resulting from a combination of factors, including overwhelming opposition from the central government and from much of the press, internal

contradictions within antiracist theory, and “internal critique” or “critical revisionism” from within the community of antiracist theorists and practitioners (Bonnett 2000 and 1993; Mac an Ghaill 1999; Lloyd 1994). The Burnage Report can be seen to be implicated in at least two of these causes. It certainly figured in the opposition of much of the press, where it was taken up as evidence of “the malign consequences” of antiracism in education (*Times* 27 Apr 1988b), and as such it has been said to figure in the unraveling of “the fragile liberal consensus” on the need to address racism in the education system which prevailed for a brief period in the mid 1980s (Rattansi 1992: 13). The Report has also been described as “one of the most important and influential statements of anti-racist ‘critical revisionism’” (Bonnett and Carrington 1996: 277). Yet in spite of this stated importance and influence, no one has as yet produced any analysis of its content or its significance, an unfortunate omission given its apparently central role in the retreat from antiracism– and the growth of racist denial– in Britain in the 1990s.

At the heart of the issues arising around the Burnage Report and the retreat from antiracism is the contested nature of the role and function of education with regard to social and political relations in society. As some observers of the 1980s public debates on antiracism pointed out, the real issue in press campaigns against antiracism was the notion of egalitarianism in education, a notion which was arguably enshrined in the Education Act of 1944 (Alibhai 1988; Roberts 1988). The 1944 Act was an ambitious undertaking aimed at addressing the impact of social inequalities on access to education, inequalities largely seen in terms of differences in social class and privilege. Although the Act’s promise of “secondary education for all” was largely seen as a question of equalizing access to education in terms of redistribution of material resources– the Act committed the government to massive expenditures on new

schools and equipment for underprivileged and economically deprived sectors of society (Lowndes 1969: 263), its focus on equal opportunities and access to education—egalitarianism—dominated educational concerns in Britain for the next forty years, and gradually came to be understood as encompassing more than simple material access and distribution.

As Raymond Williams pointed out forty years ago, the content of education consists of “a particular selection, a particular set of emphases and omissions”: such emphases and omissions are cultural choices which bear an “organic relation” to social choices within the organization of a school or society and as such they are “decisive factors affecting [educational] distribution” (Williams 1961: 125). Williams suggests that equitable educational distribution involves not only material resources, but also the content of education. Implicit in the choices made about educational content are assumptions about the dominant “social character” or “pattern of culture” prevailing in the society, assumptions which become problematic when “as often happens, the ‘social character’ is changing, or when, again, there are alternative ‘social characters’ within a given society” (Williams 1961: 126). The content of education is never some neutral and abstract body of knowledge and skills. Rather, it is the product of social and cultural choices which have implications for the social and cultural positions of those involved in the educational process. In any heterogeneous social and cultural formation therefore, the “emphases and omissions” of curricula tend to affirm and validate the social identities of some while denying those of others who are therefore more likely to be alienated from the content and process of education, thereby negatively affecting the equitable distribution of education, and reinforcing and reproducing social inequalities. Paul Willis and others have demonstrated that the persistence of inequalities in educational outcomes, in spite of the more equitable

distribution of resources and access, is related primarily to questions surrounding social identity and curriculum (Willis 1977; for similar findings in North American contexts see Anyon 1981 and Dei, et al 1997). Antiracism in education can thus be seen in the context of– and an extension of– the 1944 Act’s commitment to egalitarianism by acknowledging that educational content effects distribution just as much as the organization of material resources.

It is important to remember that when the Burnage Report became a public issue in 1988 the idea that the egalitarianism promoted by the 1944 Act should be extended to address inequalities produced by racism was less than a decade old. In the 1960s and 1970s the issue of ‘race’ in the field of education was approached primarily as two problems, one involving the school system’s ability to assimilate and/or integrate ‘immigrants’, and the other involving the cultural, and therefore, educational shortcomings of ‘immigrant’ students (Grosvenor 1997: 50-68; Carby 1982; Allen 1971). Policies to address these problems revolved around dispersing ‘immigrant’ school populations through bussing, and the creation and funding of programs to address educational and cultural ‘deficiencies’. The dispersion of ‘immigrant’ students was actually conceived of as addressing both the problem of assimilation– it had been decided that where ‘immigrants’ made up more than 30 per cent of the school population the chances of assimilation were reduced– and the problem of educational standards for indigenous students whose education was seen to suffer in schools with large numbers of educationally deficient ‘immigrant’ students (Grosvenor 1997: 53-55; Carby 1982: 185-6). The extent to which the term ‘immigrant’ was racialized may be noted from the fact that those so dispersed were almost exclusively students of Afro-Caribbean and Asian backgrounds, regardless of whether they were recent immigrants or born in Britain (Allen 1971: 125).

Growing dissent against this approach developed throughout the 1970s. An example of this was Bernard Coard's claim that the British education system's interventions, supposedly intended to assimilate and compensate for 'deficiencies', was actually a racist program to isolate black students and make them educationally "subnormal" (Coard 1971). Underlying Coard's argument was not only that racism in the society had negative effects on the education of racialized students, but that the education system itself was institutionally racist.

It was only in 1980 that the first policy statements embracing multiculturalism were drafted by local education authorities (LEAs) in Manchester and Inner London (Ball, et al 1990: 86). In the same year the Race Relations Advisor to the Home Office complained that policies and programs then in place for addressing 'race relations' represented no more than "a drop in the ocean" (Peppard 1980: 101). As the decade went on however, racism grew to become one of the most highly contested public issues in Britain. The decade saw major outbreaks of urban unrest, widely— though not universally— perceived as 'race riots', as well as an intensification of racial violence and harassment (Troyna and Hatcher 1992; Bowling 1996). The Scarman Report into the underlying causes of the 1981 Brixton 'disorders' called for interventions at schools to deal with 'prejudice' and 'racial disadvantage', and provided the impetus for many local authorities to adopt measures to address 'race relations' in schools. The report of the government appointed Swann Inquiry into the educational problems faced by racialized students— its title *Education for All* echoing the promise of the 1944 Education Act— lent official support for the need to address racialized inequalities in schools, thereby reinforcing those local education authorities and schools which had already adopted multicultural or antiracist policies, and encouraging those which had not to do so. According to Ali Rattansi it was the Swann

Report which briefly cobbled together a “fragile liberal consensus” on the matter (Rattansi 1992: 13). By mid-decade it had become possible to speak of a race relations “industry” in Britain (Sivanandan 1985), and of multiculturalism as “the new orthodoxy” in education (Troyna 1984: 76). By 1988 at least 77 of the 115 LEAs in Britain had antiracist or multicultural policies in place (Grosvenor 1997: 80).

At about the same time that LEAs and schools began to embrace multicultural and antiracist policies however, much of the press began what amounted to a campaign against Labour dominated local governments, routinely derided as “loony left”, and council or LEA policies aimed at equal opportunities and social equity (Grosvenor 1997: 80-81; see also Murray 1986; Seidel 1987*a* and 1987*b*; Gordon 1990). Coinciding with the derision of the press was the growth, especially after the 1979 election which brought the Thatcher-led Conservatives into power, of a discursive nationalism which sought to establish the terms of national inclusion (see Solomos, et al 1982; Gilroy 1987). Previously focused on the lawlessness of the inner cities where racialized communities constituted growing minorities (see Hall, et al 1978), the early 1980s saw the discursive terrain shift from crime to education (Gilroy 1992: 54-55). By the mid 1980s the press seemed bent on creating a moral panic over the issue of antiracist and multicultural education policies in which everything from the preservation of the national, social and political character and culture, to the educational future of ‘British’ children was seen to be threatened. Figures like Raymond Honeyford and Maureen McGoldrick, both Head teachers suspended for contravening LEA antiracist policies, became the subject of extensive press interest, as did the Dewsbury case, in which a group of white Yorkshire parents demanded to be allowed to send their children to a school other than the one in their catchment area since this

school had a high population of students of south Asian origin and therefore, it was claimed, could not provide the English and Christian education they wished their children to have (see Naylor 1989: Donald and Rattansi 1992: 2-3).

It is perhaps a coincidence that during the summer of 1988, as the Burnage Report and the Dewsbury case were subject to intense attention in the press, the Education Reform Act was being passed through parliament. With the “logic of backward-looking modernization” (Donald 1992: 126), the Act was driven by both neo-liberal concerns for deregulation, decentralization and reigning in the power and size of the state, and neo-conservative concerns for authoritarian state regulation of ‘traditional’ values, national unity and social cohesion. It was also explicitly concerned with an attempt to undo the spirit and promise of the 1944 Education Act. On the one hand it undermined LEA control over schools in the name of parental choice, while on the other it imposed a National Curriculum condemned as “inflexible” even by Keith Joseph, a one time Minister for Education in the Thatcher government and one of Thatcher’s oldest and staunchest supporters (*Times* 4 May 1988; and *TES* 13 May 88). Both of these aspects of the Education Reform Act can be seen as direct attacks on social equity policies such as antiracism: such policies had largely emanated from the LEAs whose power was now constrained, while the National Curriculum legislated what schools must teach, leaving little scope for the inclusion of social equity concerns at either the curricular or the policy level (Lawton 1994; Blair and Arnott 1993; Dale 1989). Introducing the Education Reform Bill before parliament in October 1987, Education Minister Kenneth Baker made explicit his government’s rejection of the concerns and guiding spirit of the 1944 Act, announcing that “the pursuit of egalitarianism is over” (quoted in Grosvenor, 1997; 77).

In the wake of the Education Reform Act the public debate on antiracism in education largely subsided. Racism itself ceased to be an issue of public concern. As Barnor Hesse has noted, through much of the 1990s in Britain

the question of racism had virtually been eliminated from the vernacular of British public culture. Despite the best efforts of local community organizations in highlighting the rise in racist attacks, continuing deaths of Black people in police custody and punitively unjust asylum and refugee laws, racism had become a non-issue in the public sphere. It had been folded back into the unsayable, unplayable 'race card'. (Hesse 2000; 9)

As Hesse suggests, the disappearance of racism as an issue of public concern is out of proportion with the ongoing impact, social and individual, of racism on the social sphere. The retreat from antiracism has not, as press representations implied it would, led to a decrease in racist violence among school-age children and youths. In the mid 1990s an article in the *Times Educational Supplement* looked back on the Burnage Report and assessed the current situation with regard to racist violence in schools (*TES* 6 Jan 1995). Laid out at the centre of the article was a "Timetable of Terror" listing 14 incidents of serious racist violence involving students between February 1991 and December 1994, five of which were fatal. Along with the relatively famous cases of Roland Adams, Rohit Duggal, and Stephen Lawrence, all them racialized young people stabbed to death by white youths, the timetable mentions two white youths, Grant Jackson and Richard Everitt killed during confrontations between school gangs divided along racialized lines. But this does not tell the whole story. Among the non-fatal incidents listed is the beating of Quaddus Ali, 17. The article does not mention that Ali suffered permanent and severe brain damage as a result of his head being repeatedly kicked against the curb after he had collapsed on the street (Human Rights Watch 1997: 26). And since the list only includes violence between school age children and youths, it does not include four adults of south Asian origin who were

killed by white youths between August 1992 and November 1994 (Human Rights Watch 1997: 21-24). Clearly, such incidents would seem to demand the need for some kind of intervention to deal with racism among young people, and the natural place for such interventions would seem to be in schools.

Yet to speak only of the effects of racism in relation to extreme cases of violence and murder is misleading, and participates in perceptions—largely sustained by the media—that it is only this form of racism which really counts. While it is the nature of the news media to find newsworthy the exceptional and extraordinary rather than the everyday, it thereby creates the perception that this is the only form of racism, and that racism is therefore a relatively minor, if lamentable issue, a rare occurrence limited to individual criminal intent. Everyday racism is rendered invisible and, as a consequence, there is little knowledge or understanding of how incidents of violence may be informed, reinforced, motivated or even sanctioned by the ubiquitous, if more subtle, expressions of racism encountered on a daily basis.

While this study focuses on the specifics of the British experience in the 1980s, these specifics are, within limitations, generalizable to much of the rest of the West, whether in Europe or North America. It does not require a great stretch of the imagination to see parallels between the Burnage Report's account of events at Burnage High School—and the school's inept attempts to manage those events—and events in other schools in other contexts. Where the Report maintained that events around the murder of Ahmed Ullah could have happened at any school in Britain (Macdonald, et al 1989: 46), I would venture that similar events could and do happen at any number of schools in Europe or North America. There is, for example, the case of Cole Harbour District High School in Nova Scotia, where racialized tensions simmered for more

than a decade, coming to national attention only when the level of violence forced the school to close for a week, re-opening only after surveillance cameras had been installed and security guards hired (*Maclean's* 20 Oct 1997; see also Saunders 1999: 13-31 and 127-141).

Comparisons can also be drawn in more general terms between the fragility of the liberal consensus on antiracism in Britain and the similar fragility of consensus on interventions against racism in North America. While the public discourses and debates have not approached the virulence of the British example, similar processes can be identified in the ongoing campaigns against affirmative action which, as in the case made against antiracism in Britain, is argued to be racist in itself. The relatively progressive stance on antiracism taken by the New Democratic provincial government in Ontario in the early 1990s was undone mid decade by the incoming Conservative government. Among its first acts when it came to power was the dismantling of the Anti-Racist Secretariat and putting on indefinite hold the implementation of antiracist guidelines for schools (Harney 1996). As in Britain, racism as a social issue dropped out of the realm of public concern for much of the 1990s in North America while attacks on antiracism or multiculturalism increased, as did the barely disguised racism of moral panics about immigration, asylum seekers and illegal refugees.

Education and the media represent critical locations within the societies and cultures where issues of social justice and equity can be addressed. They are, as James Donald writes, “overlapping cultural apparatuses or technologies” which are the primary means by which we are provided with “knowledge, values, opinions and images of ourselves and others” (Donald 1992: 123). It is by way of education and the media that our identities as individuals or categories are constituted according to the terms by which they address us, speak for us, ignore

us or revile us. The case of the Burnage Report provides a fascinating instance of where education, social discourse and the media intersect, and analysis of this intersection may shed light on all three.

2

Review of Literature and Methodology

The following chapter will attempt to provide a conceptual and methodological framework, as well as indicating the bodies of theory and literature from which this framework is derived. The chapter begins with a brief review of the literature around antiracism, focusing primarily on the British context and on some of the key conceptual issues which have been identified in relation to the notion of antiracism. This is followed with an account of the concepts of racism and racialization, with the latter term held up as an analytical concept preferable to that of 'race'. The chapter then turns to an examination of the political context of Britain in the 1980s and reviews some of the literature which has argued that racism worked to legitimate the New Right agenda adopted by the Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher. More strictly methodological concerns are introduced with a brief overview of analyses concerned with racism and the media, followed by a discussion of Cultural Studies and the circuit of cultural production on which this study is modeled.

Antiracism, Racism and the New Right

As noted in the introduction, the late 1980s and 1990's have been seen as a 'crisis' in antiracism in Britain, in which the Burnage Report is often seen as being implicated. The origins and causes of this crisis tend to be viewed in terms of internal conflicts and contradictions within antiracist theory, or the overwhelming political opposition, supported and sustained through the media, to the aims and practices of antiracism, or some combination of the two. Cathie Lloyd, for example, points out that antiracist theory derives from both universalist claims about notions of social justice and egalitarianism, and particularist claims about difference and identity which appear to be unreconcilable (Lloyd 1994). Charles Taylor offers a similar argument in his analysis of the contradictions embedded in the historical development of the concept of universal rights based on the particularist recognition of individual identities (Taylor 1994). A more common explanation for the 'crisis' has pointed out the immense political opposition brought to bear on antiracist policies and practices by a New Right, nationalist, and explicitly anti-egalitarian government which, primarily through the media, was able to characterize antiracism as anti-white and anti-British (Bonnett 1993: 50; see also Seidel 1987*a* & 1987*b*; Murray 1986; Searle 1987).

Whatever the causes of the 'crisis', its main features and consequences are summed up by Solomos and Back:

we are now faced with a period of retrenchment and retreat. After the wide-ranging public debate that went on throughout the 1980s and the initiatives of many local authorities it seems relatively clear that in recent years there has been something of a move away from making equal opportunities a priority issue. There is also a growing backlash against equal opportunity initiatives from sections of the new right, which has sought to undermine both the intellectual as well as the political justification of these initiatives...At the same time, even supporters of equal opportunity policies seem unclear about what kind of policies should be pursued in the present political and policy climate. (Solomos and Back 1995: 172)

I've cited this at some length not only because it admirably sums up the nature of the 'crisis', but also because of the use of the phrase "equal opportunity". For Solomos and Back, this phrase represents a general category, of which antiracism is a specific example. For others 'equal opportunity' is a form of antiracism (see Bonnett 2000: 111-114). This suggests a certain lack of conceptual clarity. Indeed it has been argued that antiracism suffers from conceptual inflation and theoretical underdevelopment, in which a multitude of discrete policies, practices, and theories in several fields are all embraced under the term 'antiracism' (Mac an Ghail 1999: 105-108). Any attempt to arrive at a concept of antiracism has to take into account its various usages either as a general category embracing all forms of behaviour, struggle, theorization, practice and policy committed to the elimination or the reduction of racism, or as a specific set of practices and theories which can be distinguished from other approaches.

This conceptual inflation of antiracism has muddled the debates and discourses around the issue. Thus, for example, an essay by Paul Gilroy— an alumnus of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University and one of the leading academic writers on antiracism and diasporic cultural formations— originally published in 1990, created some furore within the antiracist movement. Entitled "The End of Antiracism", the essay suggested that antiracism had become "so discredited that it is no longer useful" (Gilroy 1992: 50). Although Gilroy made it clear he was speaking of antiracism not as a political goal or objective, but as a narrowly conceived set of (mostly) bureaucratic practices divorced from the social and political context of racism, his essay was attacked as "fundamentally misguided" and as negatively affecting the morale of the antiracist movement in general (Bonnett and Carrington 1996: 271).

Even when understood in terms of a particular theoretical and practical approach, antiracism is generally not clearly or distinctly conceptualized. This particular antiracism is most commonly defined, as David Gillborn notes, by what it is not, by way of contrasting it with multiculturalism, which in this case is also defined as a particular approach, rather than a general descriptor or worldview. (Gillborn 1995: 6; see also Mac an Ghaill 1999: 103; Harper 1997; Rattansi 1992: 29; Francis 1984: 95). Within this framework multiculturalism is viewed as a theoretically ‘soft’ approach to racism, in which racism is seen as the product of ignorance and lack of experience of ‘other’ cultures, while the educational underachievement of racialized students is perceived as the result of not having their cultures appreciated in the curriculum. This approach is criticized as a politically and socially naïve view of both racism and education (Troyna 1984), and as fixing and reifying cultural categories to replace racial ones (Rattansi 1992). Antiracism, on the other hand has tended to be viewed as theoretically more rigorous and radical, and as more politically and socially astute, locating racism within the historically structured social and political hierarchies of Western cultures and societies. Yet such general agreement on theory has not led to agreement on practice.

Where antiracism is not specifically contrasted with multiculturalism, it is still often defined negatively, or by way of contrast, through critiques of certain practices which are seen to be merely symbolic or counterproductive but which, confusingly, have been generally identified under the rubric of antiracism (Gillborn 1995; Cohen 1988; Gilroy 1987 & 1992; Sivanandan 1985). Often the subject of such critiques are policies and practices implemented or sanctioned by the state in the name of antiracism. Thus, for example, Gilroy criticized the “municipal antiracism” of the Greater London Council, which largely manifested itself through expensive

publicity campaigns and declarations of principle, which little or no effect on social relations, or which unwittingly reinforced racialized social categories (Gilroy 1987; see especially 136-151). Another frequent target of criticism were the Race Awareness Training (RAT) programs commonly adapted in Britain from the late 1970s onwards, for use in in-service 'race relations' training programs in the public and private sectors. Originally developed in the U.S. for use in the military, and founded on a theory of racism that saw it primarily as a moral and psychological pathology in which all white people shared through unconscious internalization of historically structured patterns of 'racial' dominance in social hierarchies, RAT employed techniques borrowed from gestalt therapy to encourage participants to get in touch, as it were, with their inner racism (see Katz 1978). The contradictions of such a formula are summed up by Sivanandan's observation that while RAT located racism as ingrained in the social system, it contradicted its own analysis by proceeding "to demand that one change oneself rather than the system" (1985: 20). The internal contradictions of RAT, and its counterproductive emphasis on individual white guilt, frequently reinforced or exacerbated racist attitudes among participants (Sleeter 1993; Cohen 1992).

The paradox of ostensibly antiracist practices which reinforced racist attitudes led some to question the underlying theory itself. Such questioning often looked at the essentialism of much antiracist theory. While antiracism called into question the notion of "race" as some sort of 'essence' which justified racializing categories and ascriptions, it rarely questioned the essentialist categories and ascriptions underlying characterizations and definitions of racist attitudes. As Phil Cohen pointed out, often the essentialist categories underpinning racism were simply inverted in antiracist theory (Cohen 1988: 86-100; see also Cohen 1992). Participants in

antiracist training programs were thus frequently subjected to the same sort of generalizations, ascriptions and stereotypes which they were viewed to hold about racialized social groups. In a similar vein, Bonnett called into question antiracist “representation” of racism in terms of exclusive categories of white racists and black victims which not only alienates those who identify themselves as white, but imposes a uniformity on both groups and valorizes one form of racism while marginalizing other racisms (Bonnett 1993: 44-45). Increasingly, from the late 1980s through the 1990s, there were calls for an anti-essentialist antiracism in which a plurality of antiracisms were needed to address a plurality of racisms, and which recognized racisms as inextricably bound up with a variety of other interlocking social oppressions (Cohen 1988 & 1992; Gilroy 1992; Hall 1992; Rattansi 1992; Dei 1996).

One of the few attempts to offer a positive and comprehensive conceptualization of antiracism comes from George Dei (1996) whose definition of antiracism is addressed specifically at its practice in schools. For Dei it is an “action-oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change” which addresses not only racism but also other “interlocking systems of social oppression”, and does so by identifying racism as an issue of “power and equity” and creating an awareness of the “historical processes” underlying continuing processes of racialization (Dei 1996: 25). While Dei’s is one of the most complete definitions— he further lists 10 “basic principles” which illustrate and expand on the definition— and certainly forms the basis for any definitive conceptualization of antiracism in education, the fact remains that in the literature, the press, and in the Burnage Report, various usages exist side by side, often in the same sentence.

The idea of antiracism requires a concept of racism. The first point to establish in such a conceptualization is that racism functions as a form of social exclusion, defining who does and

does not belong within any particular collectivity, and resulting therefore in patterns of unequal distribution of material and cultural resources (Miles 1989: 77ff; Goldberg 1993: 91-116; Dei 1996: 29; Stanley 1999). The second point is that racism does not require 'race' as a system of categorization with any scientific validity. Indeed as Donald and Rattansi point out, the "paradox" of racism is that it persists in spite of a half century during which 'race' has been scientifically, biologically and genetically discounted as the basis of any system for signifying differences between human beings (Donald and Rattansi 1992: 1). Lacking its scientific basis, 'race' must be seen in terms of a socially constructed category, and given the fact that it is constantly reified just about everywhere in European, North American and Australasian cultural production, the notion of 'race' survives as a viable category for social research. But, as many have argued, such usage validates the reification of 'race' as a useful tool for categorization, albeit socially rather than scientifically (see Gillborn 1995; Miles 1989).

Robert Miles has argued that a more useful concept in social research is 'racialization' (Miles 1989: 73-77). Racialization is understood, in its most basic form, as the process of racial categorization. Beyond this Miles argues that it depends on signification, that is, to make certain differences in physical features or characteristics (such as skin colour), but not others (such as hair colour) meaningful and significant. Groups sharing the signified characteristics are then seen as having other shared characteristics, not necessarily visible, in order to create distinct categories and collectivities of people. Racialization then, refers to social relations "structured by the signification of...characteristics [which] define and construct differentiated social collectivities" which serve "a representational process of defining an Other" (Miles 1989: 75). To be racialized is to be identified with a group or category and to have one's individual identity

subsumed within the group identity. As Miles points out, racialization is not necessarily racist in the sense of ascribing relative values to the categories so constructed, but racism is impossible in the absence of racialization. In the absence of scientifically supportable ‘racial’ categories, the process of racialization continues to inform a racism in which differentiation and relative value are defined in terms other than biological superiority.

Martin Barker (1981) was among the first to identify the emergence of a “new” racist ideology in Britain, which he identified largely with the New Right, in which notions of biological inferiority had been replaced by a discourse centered on culture in which a hierarchical view of different cultures was implicit, while explicitly arguing only for the incompatibility of different cultures. Thus where earlier racist discourses had held up the spectre of genetic dilution or degeneration through miscegenation, cultural racism held up the spectre of cultural dilution or degeneration through multicultural mixing— a threat which implicitly held up British culture as superior and worthy of preservation in its purest form. Paul Gilroy (1987) expanded on this cultural racism and made explicit the ways in which this “new racism” was articulated in the nationalist discourses framed by the New Right, from within the Thatcher government of the day, in neo-conservative intellectual circles, and in the national media. For Gilroy this discursive “new racism” could best be described as being founded on a concept of “ethnic absolutism” in which the terms of national inclusion are based on fixed and unchanging ethnic and cultural categories— rather than on fixed and unchanging ‘racial’ categories— which allow for racist denial while upholding the same categories of racist exclusions (Gilroy 1987: 59ff; see also Gilroy 1990).

More recently, the newness of cultural racism has been questioned. Ian Grosvenor, while

in agreement with Barker's identification of a discursive shift, questions the discontinuities implied in Barker's thesis, and points to the records of parliamentary debates on immigration as indicative of the presence of a culturally defined racist discourse early in the post-war period, in which arguments in favour of restrictive immigration policies most often refer to the cultural incompatibility of new arrivals, leading them to being unable to fit into the mainstream of British life and thus becoming dependent on the welfare state, while at the same time having a negative effect on British culture (Grosvenor 1997: 18ff). Similarly, Tariq Modood notes that the oldest forms of racism in Europe, anti-Semitism and "Islamophobia" are both closer to cultural than to biological racism, and suggests that in the history of racism, cultural forms have been the rule, while "biologism" has been the exception (Modood 1997: 155). But perhaps the whole notion of some sort of distinction between cultural and biological racism misses the point. While Modood suggests that both forms operate in racist ideologies in Britain (Modood 1997: 156), it seems that most often the two forms are conflated in such ideologies and that to a large extent culture is seen as being biologically defined. In one of the parliamentary speeches cited by Grosvenor to indicate the continuity of cultural racism, Conservative MP Martin Lindsey, arguing in support of a 1958 motion to introduce immigration controls, deflects the charge that such controls might seem "illiberal":

Surely it is not illiberal...for people to be concerned with preserving their own national character and continuity. A question with affects the future of our race and breed is not one that we should leave merely to chance. (Quoted in Grosvenor 1997: 22)

Clearly, "national character" is here seen as being inextricably bound up with "race" and "breed". That such an explicit conflation of culture and race became increasingly rare is attributable to a heightened sensitivity, in the wake of both the genocidal tendencies of Nazi

Germany and the beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement in the US (the framers of the motion supported by Lindsey made specific references to contemporaneous events in Little Rock, Arkansas: see Grosvenor 1997: 20), not to be perceived as “illiberal” or racist. Just as, by the 1960s, the word “immigrant” had become a widely understood euphemism for racialized minorities from south Asia and the West Indies (Allen 1971: 125), so did “culture” replace references to race. But as Stuart Hall points out, “the cultural version continues to be underpinned by an unexamined genetic or biological commonsense” (Hall 1998: 17). The discursive shift from biological racism to cultural racism did not change the basic argument about the terms of national inclusions and exclusions, but it did allow for a denial of racism which continued to be popularly defined biological or genetic terms. Thus Enoch Powell, the former Tory cabinet minister who in 1968 raised the spectre of a coming racial apocalypse if Britain did not curtail immigration or cease pandering to immigrant groups (the infamous “Rivers of Blood” speech), asked in 1969 whether he was a “racialist”, was able to refute the charge: “If by being a racist, you mean a man who despises a human being because he belongs to another race, or a man who believes that one race is inherently superior to another...then the answer is emphatically no”. (Quoted in Seidel 1987b: 42)

The debate around antiracism needs to be seen in the context of the rise of the New Right in Britain and prime minister Margaret Thatcher’s mobilization of public support for the dismantling of social democratic “statism” through an appeal to a narrowly defined and often explicitly racialized– and racist– nationalism (Barker 1981, Hall 1983b, Gilroy 1987). Thatcher, at one time Powell’s protégée, built on Powell’s 1968 populist appeal to racism and nationalism, on his espousal of neo-liberal economics, and grafted onto all this an authoritarian appeal to

restore order to the nation. It was, as Stuart Hall called it, a “novelty” hybrid, an “authoritarian populism” aimed at undoing “the whole postwar drift..., and to force-march the society, vigorously, into the past” (Hall 1983a: 10-11).

Ironically, the populist appeal to a racializing nationalism and anti-egalitarian meritocracy which has been seen as one of the precipitating factors in the ‘crisis’ in antiracism, has itself been analyzed as a response to a deeper crisis within the British state. While it has been argued that the last century of British political history has consisted of lurching from one political and/or economic crisis to the next (Leys 1989: 28-33), the ‘crisis’ of the late 1970s which gave rise to the Thatcher government has been analyzed in terms of the Gramscian notion of an “organic crisis”, or a crisis of legitimation, in which the breakdown of consent and of state legitimacy was countered by appeals to nationalism in which the crisis was located not at the level of the state, but at the level of social disorder caused by, among other things, immigration policies which had introduced ‘alien’ elements into the ‘nation’ (Solomos et al 1982).

Thus the rise of what has been dubbed “municipal antiracism” (Gilroy 1987) took place largely in the presence of central government antipathy (Ball and Solomos 1990; 5). The issue was further complicated by the fact that local government came to be seen as a site for leftist opposition to the ‘New Right’ orientation of the central government. Much of the 1980s was therefore taken up with a continuing political struggle between the local and the central state in which the issue of racism— and particularly antiracist educational policies— played a prominent role (Gordon 1990). What Hall refers to as Thatcher’s “colonization” of the press was of key importance in establishing the terrain of a common sense rooted in the neoconservative mix of neo-liberal and Tory values— individualism, competition and anti-statism on the one hand, and

nation, authority, and tradition on the other (Hall 1983*b*: 29). It was a common sense which was highly unlikely to be sympathetic to local interventions for social equity and equal opportunities.

Racism and Media Studies

If the press may be seen as having been ‘colonized’ by the New Right in Britain, it is unlikely that this required much of a struggle. The media in general, and the press in particular, have long been seen to offer limited perspectives on ‘race’ issues, and indeed to actively promote racist ideologies: the press, not only in Britain but in Europe and North America generally, has “consistently limited the access...of ethnic minority groups” and has routinely portrayed such minorities in terms of “a problem or a threat,...in association with crime, violence, conflict, unacceptable cultural differences , or other forms of deviance” (van Dijk 1991: 20-2; see also Hartman and Husband 1974; Hall 1981*b*; Murray 1986; Seidel 1987*a*; Seidel 1987*b*; Searle 1987).

The role of the press in the reproduction of racism may be analyzed in several ways. The traditional view of the media and society sees the relationship as being either “reflective” or “manipulative”, that is, that the media either passively reflects dominant social morals and values or that it actively orchestrates and promotes these (Davidson and Lytle 1986: 378). Thus racism in the media is seen to either simply reflect levels of racism in the society at large, or is actively encouraged and supported by the social elites which control media outlets. Something approaching the latter view is reflected in the “propaganda model” of the media (Herman and Chomsky 1988) and by analyses of media produced “moral panics” around ‘deviant’ social forms such as youth subcultures (S. Cohen 1980). Explicit in these analyses is the role of the media as a

tool of social policing and control through the construction of consent.

Alternative views offer analyses both more simple and more complex. In *Policing the Crisis*, Hall *et al*, while largely in accordance with the media created “moral panic” scenario mentioned above, also point to the practice of journalism itself, in which the most frequent sources for what constitutes news and for interpretations of events come from state authorities such as police and government spokespersons, thereby accounting for the close relationship between the media and social elites without recourse to the theory of overt manipulations on the part of the media (Hall *et al* 1978). Similarly, studies dating back to the 1950s have found that the news media tend to tailor representations of events to fit into pre-existing frameworks of images, understandings and expectations (Hartman and Husband 1974:155). Hall’s further thoughts on the matter emphasize the media as a “structure, a set of practices which are not reducible to the individuals who staff them” (Hall 1981*b*: 46). Hall suggests that the problem of racism in the media is that the media is itself “constrained” by prevailing discourses and ideologies: not only is the media’s “main sphere of operations...the production and transformation of ideologies”, but the media is itself powerfully limited by those same ideologies in terms of how events and interpretations may be meaningfully constructed (Hall 1981*b*: 31, 47).

Such an analysis as Hall’s points to salience of discourse in any attempt to understand racism in the media. It has been argued that it is primarily through discourse that racism is constituted and sustained (Goldberg 1990) and perhaps the most sustained analysis of racist discourse has been the work of Teun van Dijk in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis.

As opposed to the structural and linguistic approach of traditional discourse analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis emphasizes the social and contextual aspects of discourse. Discourse

is thus viewed as a form of social interaction (van Dijk 1997) which is “socially *constitutive* as well as socially shaped” (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258). The form and content of discourse cannot be separated from social and political contexts, or from inequities in the distribution of power and resources within that context. Since public discourse is produced primarily by the media, those social groups with influence over or direct control of the media are in a position of power to shape and regulate such discourse at the expense of competing, dissenting and alternative discourses which are marginalized, not having the same power or resources to publish or be heard (van Dijk 2001: 36). Thus dominant discourses circulating within a society are generally “elite” discourses, reflecting the concerns and interests of politically and economically dominant groups (van Dijk 1991: 43). That such groups are able to win consent is viewed as a function of discourse being conceptualized as an interface between the social and the cognitive (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 266; van Dijk 2001: 36). It is through discourse that individuals learn how to understand and make sense of their social environment, and these understandings in turn shape the ways they act upon that environment. Discourse therefore reflects social practice while simultaneously reproducing the knowledges and understandings which shape such practice. As the primary vehicle for the reproduction and dissemination of discourse, the media is therefore also the primary vehicle for the construction and reproduction of racism.

Cultural Studies

There are problems attending any claim to be employing methodologies derived from Cultural Studies, which have to do with the fact that, as a field or discipline, defining Cultural Studies or identifying its methods is a far from simple matter. As evidence of these difficulties is

the fact that there is nearly as much literature devoted to explaining Cultural Studies as there is literature which claims to be Cultural Studies. Beginning with Stuart Hall's "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms" (1981*a*), and continuing through such essays and volumes as those of Richard Johnson (1983), Graham Turner (1990), Ioan Davies (1995) and Chris Barker (2002), to name only a representative few (and to name none of the introductions and prefaces of numerous anthologies and readers in Cultural Studies published since the late 1980s), Cultural Studies has sought to explain itself while simultaneously eschewing self-definition. Instead, many of these accounts provide a narrative of origins ranging from literary studies (especially the Leavisites' socio-evaluative approach of the 1930s which, by the late 1950s was built upon and expanded by Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams to include non-literary texts and artefacts from popular culture), the post-war beginnings of social history (and especially Marxist historiography in the 1950s), European structuralism (especially Barthes and Foucault), and sociology (especially the Marxist inspired critique of mass culture of the Frankfurt School), as well as feminist, antiracist, and other social protest movements from the 1960s onwards which called into question traditional notions of exclusive boundaries between the public and the private spheres of social interaction. Given such origins and debts, Johnson aptly describes Cultural Studies as being founded on "critique", which he defines as a process of both appropriation and rejection of the various theories and methods found in these diverging fields and disciplines (Johnson 1983: 9), in which the most important rejection is perhaps the refusal to limit or define Cultural Studies to any one field or in terms of a traditional, academic discipline.

What emerges from such accounts is a Cultural Studies which takes on a multidisciplinary analysis of culture in which culture is broadly seen as an arena where struggles for power among

competing– but unequal– social groups are enacted. What also emerges is an embrace of Marxist social analysis and critique while rejecting canonical Marxist theories which reduce culture to an effect of economism– a superstructure dependent on the economic base– or which define cultural production solely in terms of a top-down imposition by dominant elites. Rather, such production is generally seen within Cultural Studies as resulting from a complex interplay involving myriad social and cultural forces. Such an understanding has been theoretically bolstered by the appropriation among many cultural theorists, largely by way of Stuart Hall, of the non-canonical ideas and theories of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, especially his notion of hegemony as explaining the ability of elites to win participatory consent from subordinate groups. This leads to a final point, which is that Cultural Studies is “about”, as Johnson succinctly puts it, “the historical forms of consciousness or subjectivity” (Johnson 1983: 22). The analysis of culture is concerned with the forces which shape and form such subjectivities which, in turn, provide the basis for understanding and acting on the social.

Given its aggressively multidisciplinary ethos, it is not surprising that it is difficult to identify a single or dominant Cultural Studies methodology. According to McGuigan, it is “difficult to say quite what cultural studies amounts to methodologically”, owing at least partly to a “general rule of avoidance” within Cultural Studies on discussing methodological issues (McGuigan 1997: 1). Grossberg, et al argue that Cultural Studies has “no distinct methodology”, and that the best term that might be used to describe Cultural Studies methodology is “bricolage” (Grossberg, Nelson, Treichler 1992: 2). Part of the difficulty can be traced to the value many in Cultural Studies see in refusing to be defined in terms of academic categorization and disciplines, and an almost mystical embrace of its indeterminate status. Something of this nature seems to be

illustrated in Richard Johnson's statement that Cultural Studies is "a kind of alchemy for producing useful knowledge...[c]odify it and you might halt its reactions" (Johnson 1983: 9). Yet a few pages further along in the same essay, Johnson is in a much less mystical frame of mind when he offers a heuristic for how a cultural study might be modeled.

The Circuit of Cultural Production

The present study is organized, conceptually and practically, on Johnson's model for a circuit of "the production, circulation and consumption of cultural products" (Johnson 1983: 21). The model is based on the idea that 'texts' (which in Cultural Studies terminology may refer to any culturally produced— and therefore culturally significant and meaningful artefact) are produced and 'read' within specific contexts and conditions which affect not only the form and content of the text, but also the ways in which they are understood, made to signify, and made meaningful. The conditions of production influence the form and content of the cultural text or artefact, and these in turn become part of the conditions in which the text is read. Readings or understandings of the text have an impact on lived cultures and/or social relations, which in turn become part of the conditions for future cultural production. Thus the model diagramed by Johnson is a continuous cycle, on which are mapped the four main "moments": 1) production (and its conditions); 2) texts and forms of texts; 3) readings (and their conditions); and 4) lived cultures/social relations. In addition to these "moments" Johnson interposes between them the transformative processes to which the text is subject as it moves around the circuit. Thus, during the process of publication, the text is subject to "public representations"; it then acquires general or universal meanings which are "abstract" in the sense that they are divorced from the particular

conditions of production; these meanings themselves become concrete or particular as the readings and understandings of the text influence lived cultures and social relations; and thus the public forms return to have meaning and impact on private lives. Thus the circuit of cultural production mapped out by Johnson takes into account both the transformative impact of texts on social relations and future cultural production, and the transformative impact of publication on texts. These interlocking and complementary processes tend to render as unstable and unpredictable what significance a text may acquire and what utility a text may come to have as it goes through the moments and the processes of production and publication. Before explaining how the circuit of cultural production will be adapted and employed in the analysis of the Burnage Report offered here, I would like to turn first to a discussion of two concepts central to Johnson's model, those of readings and representation.

Readings

Crucial to the view of cultural production embraced by Johnson is the likelihood that the conditions under which 'texts' are produced may vary with the conditions under which they are 'read', and that the text may undergo transformations as it is abstracted during the process of publication and representation, leading to multiple possible 'readings' or even "mis-readings" (Johnson 1983: 29). That texts may be read in a variety of ways is obviously not a new idea. The important point for Cultural Studies is not that such a variety exists, but that readings are dependent on the specific conditions and social milieux in which they occur, including relative positions of power and access to resources. An early attempt at systemizing and categorizing the variety of possible 'readings' was Stuart Hall's "Encoding/decoding" (1980) which Johnson cites

as a major source for his model (Johnson 1983: 27n). Hall argued that readings of texts might be roughly categorized as “preferred”, “negotiated” or “oppositional”, depending on readers’ social and ideological proximity to the codes or discourses expressed in the text. A preferred reading of a text is thus the one which most successfully “decodes” the intentions, perspectives and ideologies expressed in the text, and which is enabled by the reader sharing or participating in the same general perspectives and ideologies. As the reader’s ideological and/or social distance from the text’s message increases, the more likely it is that the reading will be “negotiated” or “oppositional”. Readings are “negotiated” when readers find ways of accommodating themselves to the ideological perspectives encoded in texts even though their own social or ideological positions or interests may be in conflict with those of the text. Readings are “oppositional” when the distance between texts and readers are so great that accommodation or negotiation is impossible, resulting in either a complete rejection of the text, or in a reading that goes against the grain of the intentions and perspectives offered. Hall argues that most readings are, to greater or lesser extent, negotiated, given the wide range of complex and multiple social and political positions most individuals occupy. As Hall concludes, “the most significant political moments” is when negotiated readings give way to oppositional ones and “the ‘politics of signification’– the struggle in discourse– is joined” (Hall 1980; 138).

Hall’s work on readings has been much critiqued, even within the realm of Cultural studies, as being overly deterministic, and as underestimating the variety and unpredictability of individual responses to texts (see Turner 1990: 111ff). Johnson seems to acknowledge as much when he states that the reception of texts and the uses to which they are put are unpredictable– so much so that “mis-readings” are normalized in his model– since they are

influenced not only by differences in material and cultural resources of power, but also by “existing ensembles of cultural elements already active within particular social *milieux*” (Johnson 1983: 29). In spite of this, Hall’s terminology continues to be used, and continues to provide a useful conceptual and analytical vocabulary.

Representation

In Johnson’s model of the circuit of cultural production the publication of the text coincides with “public representations” which involve “abstraction”, which for Johnson means that the representations imbue the text with generalized meanings abstracted and divorced from the specific meanings which arose out of the conditions of production. In other words, a text which was shaped by, and which responded to, a specific set of conditions is, through the process of representation, provided with generalized meanings, articulations and significance which go beyond, or may be unrelated to, the specific circumstances addressed in the text. In this sense, the meanings offered up by the representations may come to replace the original meanings of the text itself.

As Stuart Hall points out, representation is the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged through language (Hall 1997: 15-16). Since objects or events acquire significance only when they are imbued with meaning, there is a sense in which they exist only through the process of representation. Thus, according to Michel Foucault, it is the nature of representation—and the problem of representation—that it effaces both the object represented as well as the individual consciousness behind the act of representation (Foucault 1970: 16). The representation provides meaning, and therefore it is the representation which is significant, not

the object or event itself. Meaning is constructed through representation, yet this is so commonplace that the construction– and the individual consciousness behind the construction– is rendered invisible. An intrinsic connection between the object or event and its representation is taken for granted. Thus a newspaper report, for example, while seemingly presenting an account of an event, in fact “re-presents” the event and in the process becomes the event itself. Reporters and journalists rarely, if ever, acknowledge the particular choices, perspectives and understandings which go into the construction of the representation, but silently claim to be ‘presenting’ the thing itself. The problem of press and media representations is not simply a question of whether they are factual or ‘true’, but that they replace the object or event represented with a particular construction of its meaning. Thus representations are not so much judged by their relation to facts, as by their ability to make meaning, and the ability to make meaning depends largely on the extent to which representations partake in prevailing social discourses.

According to Johnson, it is at the point where representation and power intersect that dominant meanings are reproduced, while subordinate ones are silenced. Public representations often “work to seal social groups in existing relations of dependence” while simultaneously ensuring that the social concerns of subordinate groups are removed from public consideration. The experiences and social concerns of marginalized and subordinate groups are “actively privatised,...are invisible, without public remedy”, while alternative or dissenting perspectives are rarely heard due to the unequal access to the material and political resources required to make such views public (Johnson 1983: 37). Public representation not only works to define, delimit and constitute public issues and concerns, but also serve to stigmatize those privatized, subordinate concerns which threaten to become public. Such public representations work to

present subordinate discourses and practices as inauthentic and irrational, and the experiences which give rise to them are represented “as pathological, problems for intervention not in the organisation of society as a whole, but in the attitudes or behaviour of the suffering group itself” (Johnson 1983: 38). Thus representation not only defines the meaning and significance of texts, but also actively undermines any possible alternatives.

The Burnage Report and Circuits of Cultural Production

In terms of the Cultural Studies definition of cultural products, the Burnage Report is a text which can be analyzed by way of Johnson’s circuit, although several problems immediately present themselves. First, it should be noted that Johnson’s model for cultural production has not been widely embraced in practice as Cultural Studies itself entered mainstream academia and increasingly became a vehicle for celebrating the role of popular culture in providing the material for pleasure, individual identity construction and empowerment, while neglecting the critical perspectives, including political economies, on media and culture of its origins (Kellner 1997: 20). Indeed, to my knowledge the only study to employ an adapted form of Johnson’s circuit was du Gay, et al’s study of the Sony Walkman (du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay and Negus 1997). Second, the du Gay, et al study, and Johnson’s own hypothetical drive around the circuit in the British Leyland Mini– Metro, both have as their object of analysis a market commodity as well as a cultural product. In these cases public representations most frequently take the form of advertizing specifically designed to create consumers, or to create subject positions for consumers in which possession of the commodity is required. The object of such public representations is commercial, and the process is one in which the cultural product/commodity is

presented as being attractive or necessary to the subject positions created in the representation/advertisement in order to maximize profits. Thus there are few examples of how to conduct an enquiry along the lines of the circuit of cultural production, and none at all which take as their object a non-commercial product or text such as the Burnage Report.

Furthermore, where the cultural product is a commodity, and public representations often take the form of advertizing, readings are derived both from the abstractions offered through advertizing as well through concrete encounters with the commodity itself (Johnson 1983: 32). In the case of the Burnage Report there were considerably fewer opportunities for readers outside Manchester to encounter the Report itself, given the fact that it was withheld from publication until a year and a half after it had ceased to be of much interest to the press, and thereby had ceased to be an important public issue. On the other hand, when it comes to press and media representations, such inaccessibility to the events or objects of news reports is the norm— the vast majority of readers do not have first hand knowledge of the events with which to compare media representations. When it comes to news reports, private readings are almost always mediated through other readings which are turned into public representations. My use of the circuit is therefore heavily adapted to try and address the particulars of public discourse as expressed through the press. Before discussing these adaptations and attendant issues, I will sketch out how this study is mapped out on the circuit of cultural production.

The initial “moment” in Johnson’s model concerns the production and the conditions of production. In this study this moment will be presented in the form of an account of the events leading up to the commissioning of the Macdonald Inquiry, its terms of reference and procedure, as well as indicating the prevailing discourses and practices of both antiracism and of the anti-

antiracist backlash during the period of the of the mid 1980s. I hope thereby to suggest the theoretical perspective of the members of the panel, the issues which they hoped to address, the alternative theories and practices they attempted to put forward, and they way all these helped to shape the form and content of their Report. The data and information presented in this section will be derived from the *Times* coverage of earlier issues which arose in public debates around antiracism (such as the Honeyford case), secondary sources as well as from the published version of the Burnage Report itself.

The second “moment” of the circuit is given by Johnson as texts and forms, taking into account the conditions of production. In this study this “moment” will be presented in terms of a thick and detailed description and analysis of the form and content of the Burnage Report itself. Such a thick description is necessary to establish a ‘preferred’ reading of the Report and to provide a basis on which to judge whether there was a disjunction between the Report and its representations in the press. This disjunction, first pointed to by the members of the Inquiry panel themselves, indicates the contested nature of the meaning of the Report. If the press representations derive from, as will be argued, oppositional readings, or readings against the grain of the codes and perspectives of the Report, it is necessary to make an argument about the preferred reading of the Report, one well supported with evidence from the text itself.

The third “moment” of the model is the reception or the readings generated by the cultural text. Johnson does not make entirely clear how or on what basis readings are to be constituted or analyzed. On the one hand he urges researchers not to ignore ‘real’ and historically situated readers, but on the other hand suggests that readings may be analyzed according to the subject positions offered by the text, thus deriving readings from theory and inferred, hypothetical readers

(see Johnson 1983: 65-68). My own solution is also problematic. I propose to present the reception of the Burnage Report by way of the readings offered in the press. I recognize the danger here of conflating readings with public representations, although it seems clear to me that any public representation is both an individual reading, as well as an attempt to shape subsequent readings.

The account of the readings of the Burnage Report presented in this study consists primarily of newspaper reports and editorials from the *Times*, although some attention will also be given to articles which appeared in the *Guardian*, and the newsweekly magazine *New Statesman*. References to other newspapers' readings and representations of the Burnage Report will also be offered, though generally by way of secondary sources– the most important of these being the press release written by the Macdonald Inquiry panel complaining of the press response to the Report (the text of which is included in the prefatory materials in the published version of the Burnage Report; see Macdonald, et al 1989: xvii-xxv), and an article which appeared as an appendix to the summary version of the Report (see Gordon 1989).

My reasons for focusing on the *Times* have to do in part with that paper's historical status as *the* national newspaper in Britain, its status running roughly parallel to that enjoyed by the *Globe & Mail* in Canada or the *New York Times* in the United States. More importantly, the *Times* is an agenda setting newspaper, with the power to influence or define, even for other newspapers and media outlets, what stories or events are newsworthy. In Britain the *Times* occupies what Herman and Chomsky call the “top tier” of news outlets, this “top tier” being measured by “prestige, resources and outreach”, and which therefore “defines the news agenda and supplies much of the national and international news to the lower tiers of the media, and thus

to the general public” (Herman and Chomsky 1988: 4-5). The *Times*, as the flagship of Rupert Murdoch owned News Corp., enjoyed the resources of the third largest media corporation in the world (after U.S. media giants G.E. and Westinghouse) in 1986 (Herman and Chomsky 1988: 6).

As part of its status as a “top tier” newspaper the *Times* cultivates an editorial stance reflective of the political establishment, as opposed to what is seen to be the right-wing conservative bias of the *Daily Telegraph*, or the perceived left-wing progressive bias of the *Guardian*. As the popular wisdom about these three papers says: “The *Times* is read by the people who run the country; the *Guardian* is read by people who would like to run the country; the *Daily Telegraph* is read by the people who remember the country as it used to be” (quoted in Wheeler 1997: 65). It should be noted that these three papers, along with the *Independent*, constitute what is usually referred to as the “quality” press, as opposed to the tabloids, such as the *Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, and the *Mirror*, all of which enjoy far greater circulation numbers than the “quality” broadsheets¹, but which have a reputation for being short on analysis, and long on sensationalism, celebrity gossip, sex and, with the exception of the *Mirror*, a right-wing, jingoistic– and often blatantly racialized and racist– nationalism (Murray 1986; Searle 1987; Wheeler 1997:67-70).

While the *Times* was not the most widely read newspaper in Britain in the 1980s, nor even the widest circulating “quality” broadsheet, it enjoyed a reputation as being somewhat above the partisanship of the competing broadsheets, and well above the sensationalism and crudity of the

¹ The *Sun* has been the most widely read newspaper in Britain for more than twenty years, its circulation of roughly 4 million easily outstripping *The Mirror*’s 2.5 million and *The Daily Mail*’s 1.7 million. The only “quality” broadsheet with circulation numbers approaching these is *The Daily Telegraph* with a circulation of just over a million. The numbers for both *The Times* and *The Guardian* are about half those of *The Telegraph* (figures are for 1993-94, quoted in Wheeler 1997: 64).

tabloids. Yet at the same time, after the paper's acquisition by *The Sun*'s owner Rupert Murdoch in 1981, the *Times* shifted towards the right. This can be seen as a predictable shift for a paper associated with the political establishment when that establishment itself moved to accommodate the ascendant neoconservatism under Margaret Thatcher, or as a result of Murdoch's close personal relationship with Thatcher (Wheeler 1997: 59). In either case, the *Times* increasingly came to be seen as providing a kind of highbrow support for the views espoused in the *Sun*. According to Nancy Murray, "[w]hat the *Sun* dispenses at one end of the social scale, its stablemate the *Times* legitimates at the other" (Murray 1986: 7). Thus the *Times* offers a more sophisticated version of the views espoused by the most widely read— and most notorious— newspaper in Britain.

While my analysis of press representations of the Burnage Report concentrates on the *Times*, reference will also be made to other newspaper accounts appearing in the crucial period in late April and early May of 1988 when the Burnage Report first entered into public discussion, in order to establish whether the reception in the *Times* was part of a larger discourse. Specifically, I examine the early coverage provided by the *Guardian*, a paper with an editorial policy generally recognized to be to the political left of the *Times*, which might therefore be expected to offer alternative readings and representations of the Report. Reference to other national newspapers are derived from secondary sources.

The press accounts of the Burnage Report, from the *Times* and elsewhere, will be analyzed in terms of the ongoing discourses in which they participate. Analysis of the press accounts will make use of the general concept of Hall's "codes" while making specific use of elements of van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analytical approach as employed in *Racism and the Press* (1991).

Articles and reports will therefore be analyzed in terms of interplay between the “micro structures” of style, syntax, layout and so on, and the “macro structures” of meaning which are often indicated by the headline and lead (van Dijk 1991: 45-46). Attention will also be paid to the semantic structures and strategies employed by the articles (van Dijk 1991: 179ff). I will also follow Johnson in attempting to tease out what subjective positions were made available in these readings and representations, and what subject positions were closed off. Key to the analysis is also the relationship between the press readings and representations of the Burnage Report and the report itself. Here again the critical questions surround what was included and what was left out, and the discursive aims of such textual inclusions and exclusions.

The fourth moment in Johnson’s model is the overall effect of the previous moments of production, textual forms and readings on lived cultures and social relations. In this study, this component of the circuit can only be suggested, and would be a project beyond the scope of this study which is primarily concerned with public representations rather than private receptions. Accordingly, I give a partial account of the impact on lived cultures and social relations by briefly examining, by way of secondary sources, the state of antiracism education and antiracism theory in Britain in the 1990s. In this section I will pay special attention to that academic literature on antiracism which cites or refers to the Burnage Report. The key question here is what effect public representations and readings in the press has had on the ways in which the Burnage Report was subsequently viewed, and to suggest the extent, if any, of the reproductive and hegemonizing power of the press representations. If the academic literature reflects the perspectives offered by the press in a field which is generally critical and analytical, this would strongly suggest the parameters of the way in which the Burnage Report was understood within the wider, non-

specialist, social sphere.

In Johnson's model the circuit returns to the first moment, in which the previous four moments are seen to have an impact of subsequent cultural production. In this study I will briefly examine the press reception afforded the 1999 Macpherson Report on the findings of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry which was widely— though not exclusively— seen within the academic literature to herald a “return to favour” of antiracism in Britain following a decade during which racism virtually ceased to be recognized as an issue of public concern, either in the education sector or elsewhere. I do not pretend to provide a complete account here, but merely to sketch out the continuities and discontinuities of the discourse ten years on. Apart from selected press accounts on the Lawrence Inquiry and the Macpherson Report, I also examine the early interpretations and judgements in the academic literature.

To summarize, this study examines the Burnage Report in terms of a cultural text, employing the model of the circuit of cultural production. The data consists primarily of three sets of texts: the Burnage Report, the press readings and representations of the Report, and the subsequent academic literature on antiracism in which the Report is cited. In examining and analyzing this data I hope to answer the following questions. First, what would a preferred reading of the Burnage Report look like? Second, how does this preferred reading relate to the reception— the readings and representations— given the Report in the British national press? This question may be broken down into two more specific questions: what was the Report's reception in the *Times*; and is there evidence that this reception was similar to that in other newspapers? Third, which Burnage Report enters into the academic literature on antiracism, the one constructed through press representations, or the one evident in the preferred reading offered

here? These questions are framed within a more general scope of inquiry, which is the question of the role of the media in the reproduction of discourses on education and antiracism.

3

The Burnage Report and the Conditions of Production

In this chapter I intend to sketch out some elements of the context within which the Burnage Report was produced. It needs to be emphasized that this sketch is largely suggestive rather than exhaustive, and does not take into account several aspects of the conditions of production such as, for example, the specific processes by which the members of the Inquiry panel sifted through the evidence or the material conditions involved in the writing of their Report. Instead this chapter is limited to giving an account of the public debates and discourses around antiracism in education which had taken place– or were taking place– at the time of the Inquiry, of the incipient “internal critique” of policies and practices aimed at dealing with racism, as well as the specific circumstances which gave rise to the Inquiry and which shaped its conduct and procedures. In this way I intend to suggest the issues and concerns which the Inquiry panel hoped to address. The elements which are presented here have been guided to a large extent by references within the Report itself, which reveal that the members of the panel were conscious of– and addressing themselves to– the public contests and conflicts around

antiracism.

Press Representations of Multiculturalism and Antiracism

With regard to antiracism in Britain, the 1980s were a remarkably compressed decade. When the Macdonald Inquiry was inaugurated in May 1988, the first attempts to address racism in schools were less than eight years old, while the first educational policies explicitly identified with antiracism had been in place for only three years. The earliest educational policy statements to address racism were the commitments to multicultural education undertaken by the Manchester and Inner London local education authorities (LEAs) in 1980 (Troyna 1984: 76; see also Ball, Gulam and Troyna 1990: 84-6). Such commitments to multiculturalism became more widespread after the Scarman Report on the causes the urban “disorders” of 1981 called for intervention in the education sector to address the “racial disadvantage” which was found by Scarman to be one of the contributing factors in what had been widely described as ‘race riots’ in Brixton and other British cities in the spring and summer of 1981 (Scarman 1982). By 1984 multiculturalism was being described as “the new orthodoxy” in education (Troyna 1984: 76), and the following year the Swann Report on the education of children from ethnic minority groups – originally commissioned by the central government’s Department of Education and Science (DES) in 1979– gave something approaching official support and legitimacy for multicultural education (Bonnett and Carrington 1996: 273; Rattansi 1992: 12-13), even though Education Minister Keith Joseph would eventually reject the Swann Report’s key recommendations (Grosvenor 1997: 70). At about the same time that the Swann Report was published, multiculturalism was beginning to be superseded in some LEAs with antiracism.

Here again the Manchester LEA– the Manchester Education Committee– was a pioneer in the field, committing itself to antiracism in late 1984 and adopting a policy statement to this end in early 1985 (Ball, et al 1990: 86).

Virtually from the moment that multicultural, and the later antiracist, policies began to be adopted by municipal councils and LEAs, they came under attack. The nature of these attacks, and the leading role played by the press, have been well documented (Richardson 1992; Gordon 1990; Searle 1987; Seidel 1987*a* and 1987*b*; Murray 1986). Characterized as a “discourse of derision” (Grosvenor 1997: 81), it ran the gamut from petty ridicule of the “looney left” in local councils and LEAs through often fabricated or exaggerated stories such as the banning the nursery rhyme “baa baa black sheep” at schools (Searle 1987: 62), to more serious accusations. As summarized by Bhikhu Parekh, a member of the Swann Committee, the attack on multiculturalism consisted of three main claims: that it would make “good education” subordinate “to the demands of ethnic minorities”; that it undermines the “common public culture without which a society cannot be held together”; and that it is “socially divisive as it accentuates the cultural self-consciousness of the ethnic minorities” (Parekh 1985: 23). Antiracism, in turn, was denounced as fostering racial divisiveness; as leftist indoctrination; as undermining traditional culture and values; as an infringement on rights and freedoms or as racism itself, directed against white Britons (Gordon 1990: 176).

While the attacks on multiculturalism and antiracism may have been a “discourse of derision”, they were also participating in a discourse which can be traced back to Enoch Powell’s infamous “Rivers of Blood” speech of 1968. The object of Powell’s speech was to vilify the anti-discrimination laws contained within the 1968 Race Relations Act which would,

Powell claimed, make the English “strangers in their own country” and even “second class citizens”. By way of a series of startling inversions which would become all too familiar in the 1980s, Powell claimed that such laws would allow “immigrants” to be “elevated into a privileged and special class” while “the citizen [would] be denied his right to discriminate in the management of his own affairs...” Those who demand such laws “have got it exactly and diametrically wrong” since “discrimination and deprivation...lies not with the immigrant population but with those among whom they have come.” The Race Relations Bill would establish “a one-way privilege” and “give the stranger, the disgruntled and the *agent provocateur* the power to pillory [the English] for their private actions.” Far from encouraging integration, the Race Relations Bill served “vested interests” which aimed for “the preservation and sharpening of racial and religious differences, with a view to the exercise of actual domination...over the rest of the population” (the complete text of the speech is in Hall 1998).

The continuities between the discourse which Powell publicly initiated and the press campaigns against multiculturalism and antiracism are clear. The main discursive strategy employed is that of attribution and reversal (van Dijk 1991: 193). Attempts to address racism come to be seen as the source of the problems they address. Thus multiculturalism, antiracism and anti-discrimination laws are themselves claimed to be productive of racial divisiveness and racism, while attempts to address social, political, legal and educational inequalities are presented as producing such inequalities. Concerns over rights and freedoms are infringements on rights and freedoms, and the rejection of assimilative practices which deny the validity of cultures and traditions are seen to undermine culture and tradition. The attack on social equity policies thrive by simple inversion. Any argument made on behalf of oppressed, subordinate

groups is turned on its head so that the privileged and the dominant groups may be presented as the victims of the case. It is a discourse of cultural racism (Barker 1981; Seidel 1987b) which participates in racist denial while making clear the terms of racist exclusions. The arguments behind social equity policies are valid only when applied to the dominant and privileged 'British' majority, making clear that racialized groups cannot be seen as British or as full members and participants within the British state.

Many of the elements of the 'anti-antiracist' discourse coalesced around the protracted case of Raymond Honeyford, Head of a secondary school in Bradford who was suspended by his LEA after complaints, both within the LEA and from the school community, about his published writings on multiculturalism and antiracism. The case is important for several reasons, firstly because of the "massive interest" (van Dijk 1991: 56)¹ of the media, which continued throughout the two year long saga, but also because the discourse against antiracism figured in his own writings as well in the press accounts about him.

Honeyford had a history of run-ins with the Bradford LEA, a fact often overlooked in the press accounts, having initially drawn reprimands in July 1982— two years before the case was brought to national attention by the media— for writing letters on official school notepaper to a local newspaper complaining of Bradford's public spending on multicultural community and education initiatives (Halstead 1988: 57). He continued to earn warnings and reprimands from

¹ An indication of this "massive interest" van Dijk's tabulation of word frequency in headlines of British press reports on 'race' issues between 1 August 1985 and 31 January 1986, which has "Honeyford" as the 13th most frequently used word in the headlines. The only individual name which ranks higher than his is that of Home Secretary Douglas Hurd, who comes in 9th. Such an examination almost certainly underestimates the frequency of articles on Honeyford since it cannot account for those which do not name him in their headlines. See van Dijk 1991: 54. The *Times* ran 70 items on the case from 24 March 1984 through to the end of 1985, 56 of which appeared in the last ten months of 1985.

the local authority for articles published over the next two years. The first of these was a relatively early diatribe against multiculturalism, “Multiracial Myths?”, which appeared in the *Times Educational Supplement* in November 1982. The sub-head of the article presents Honeyford as an authority on the matter on the basis of being “headmaster of a multiracial school” (see Honeyford 1982). In it Honeyford characterized multiculturalism as a questionable ““theory”” (the word is placed within inverted commas in the text) based on “dubious” research put forward by so-called ““experts”” (again inverted commas) whose arguments are often “strident” and contain notes of “intolerance”. The educational underachievement and racism multiculturalism is supposed to address are both dismissed since the educational difficulties are caused by cultures and family structures unsupportive of education, and racism in Britain is “emphatically not a white versus black phenomenon” but rather the result of animosity between Asian and West Indian communities. However, “multiracial education” may well produce racism where none existed before, because it “may help to generate a wholly artificial and harmful colour consciousness in our schools.” Honeyford further asserted that an emphasis on “the validity and achievement of Asian and Caribbean history” coupled with a “critical view of British imperialism...confuses education with propaganda”, and that while there “should be a welcome for the strangers in our midst” there should be “no attempt by the educational service to confer a privileged position on this sub-culture or that.” In a further article published in the *Times Educational Supplement* the following year, Honeyford makes repeated references to how education at his school— where the majority of students were of south Asian, Muslim backgrounds— is “undermined by a combination of religious fanaticism, official timidity and the misguided race relations lobby” (Honeyford 1983).

Apart from getting attention in the LEA, the articles also began to attract the attention of the local community. But it wasn't until a local Bradford newspaper published, in March 1984, an article which Honeyford had originally written for the conservative journal, the *Salisbury Review*, that a campaign arose among parents' groups for Honeyford's dismissal (Halstead 1988: 85). This article repeated most of his earlier arguments, but also included the claim that multiculturalism lowered educational standards for all students, and particularly those from the "indigenous" population who were becoming increasingly "dispossessed" (Honeyford 1988: 99). The article also referred a community relations officer Honeyford had encountered at an LEA meeting as a "half-educated and volatile Sikh" who exemplified "[t]he hysterical political temperament of the Indian sub-continent...an extraordinary sight in an English School Hall" (Honeyford 1988: 94).

The next two years would see a competing parents' groups— those for Honeyford and those against— almost constantly picketing the school, and would see Honeyford take extended sick leave, be suspended, then reinstated, and eventually take early retirement. During those two years much of the national press turned Honeyford into a martyr to the cause of free speech and a victim of the intolerance of antiracism (van Dijk 1991: 56).

In the *Times* such an understanding of the Honeyford case was promoted in articles and editorials. Regular *Times* columnist Roger Scruton, a Cambridge philosophy professor and, coincidentally, the editor of the *Salisbury Review*, the journal which provided an outlet for many of Honeyford's articles, set the tone for much of the paper's coverage. His first column on the affair, "Bigots in a class of their own" (Scruton 1984a), appearing before the Bradford LEA had taken any action, set the matter as a conflict between the "refusal to compromise over the truth"

and a “censoriousness and bigotry” comparable to that which dominates “half of Europe”— a reference which links antiracism with communism and totalitarianism. Honeyford’s experience as the head of a school where “white working class children...constitute the ‘ethnic minority’” is presented as providing authority for his views on the “nonsense” of multicultural education— Scruton does not allow equal legitimacy to another Bradford head who had been critical of Honeyford’s views. Honeyford’s published views on multiculturalism are “rational” responses to “the extensive propaganda against our schools...produced by people who despise our traditions..., civilized discourse and respect for truth.” Another of Scruton’s columns on Honeyford asks “Who are the real racists?” (*Times* 30 Oct 84: 10g), and offers a choice between Honeyford— “the teacher who truthfully confronts the problems of multi-ethnic education”— and sociology professor Chris Mullard. It’s an odd comparison, Mullard being chosen not for being in any way involved in calls for Honeyford’s dismissal, but rather for the decontextualized quotability of his writings on his resentment of white racism.

Apart from Scruton’s columns, articles and editorials appearing in the *Times* made similar claims related to antiracism as a form of leftist ideology threatening free speech and promoting racism. One editorial, “Hunt The Heresy” (*Times* 26 March 85) likens Honeyford’s offence to an Orwellian “thought-crime”, claims that antiracism is Labour’s “cynical bid to win Asian votes” (in spite of the fact that policies in Bradford were the result of all-party consensus; see Roberts 1988: 14; Halstead 1989: 18) and part of a pattern of “intolerance” at the heart of the “harsh new orthodoxy” of antiracism, in which independent thought has become “heresy”.

In contrast to the strident reversals of attribution evident in items cited above, a *Times* article summarizing the Honeyford case on the eve of a court decision on whether the Bradford

LEA had the right to suspend Honeyford makes use of more subtle discursive and semantic strategies to make implicit claims about the source of Honeyford's troubles (*Times* 3 Sept. 1985). It notes, for example that the *Salisbury Review* has a circulation of only 1,000 and that parents at Honeyford's school are more likely to have seen an Urdu translation put out by the Parents' committee calling for Honeyford's dismissal. Several members of this parents' group are interviewed, but only two are named: the "group's spokesman" is Jenny Woodward, "a former law student" whose daughter no longer attends the school, and another person is identified as Olivia Foster Carter, a "West Indian sympathizer" from the University of Bradford who has no children at the school but was once involved in doing research at the school on "what children were taught about the Third World". The other four members present at the interview are "Pakistani fathers, two of whom said nothing beyond introducing themselves". The article would seem to provide an excellent example of "overcompleteness" or "functional irrelevancy" (van Dijk 1991:185) which nevertheless works to establish implicit meanings. The fact that the majority of students Honeyford's school were of south Asian and Muslim backgrounds had been well-documented in previous articles, but the point is implicitly made again by the suggestion that most parents only had access to Honeyford's writings by way of an Urdu translation made available by the group which is leading the call for Honeyford's dismissal, ignoring the fact that the offending article had been reprinted in a local paper. The way the article presents the members of this group provides a great deal of information about two of its members, including their names, credentials and university affiliations. One of these two is explicitly identified as "West Indian" and therefore not of south Asian background, while the other is not identified in terms of ethnicity at all, but whose name suggests origins other than

south Asian. Of the four members identified as “Pakistani fathers” nothing further is said, except for the odd detail that two of them said nothing during the interview. Why is this detail included? The implication for most readers would likely be that the parent’s group is ‘spoken for’ and led by intellectuals, neither of whom are south Asian, one of whom is a former law student and the other an antiracist researcher, both of whom do most of the talking while half of the South Asian representatives of the group do not speak at all. Thus the legitimacy of parents’ calls for Honeyford’s dismissal is undermined by being presented as being stirred up by people with little stake in the issues– neither presently having children at the school, and neither belonging the south Asian community which makes up a majority of the school population.

The media attention given to the Honeyford case had the advantage of personalizing an abstract debate by way of a beleaguered head whose career was being threatened by a lobbying group made up of antiracists. The press looked to other cases which might similarly personalize the debate. On the heels of the Honeyford affair, the cases of ESL teacher John Savery and head teacher Maureen McGoldrick were taken up by the press and made to fit the pattern. Savery was not actually in the employ of a LEA, but was contracted by a multicultural centre as a part-time English as a Second Language teacher at a Bristol school. He was also a contributor to the *Salisbury Review* and when one of his articles– “Anti-racism as Witchcraft” – came to the attention of the centre, his contract was not renewed. His case was reported on in terms of another example of the “black militant threat to free speech” (*Times* 23 May 86), and highlighted in several columns and a leading editorial which identified him in its headline as “A Victim of Anti-Racism” (*Times* 24 May 86). For columnist Ronald Butt the case provided evidence of “the hard left cells...now malignantly exploiting racial tensions in our schools”

(*Times* 30 Oct 86).

McGoldrick, suspended by the Brent LEA after remarks she made in the course of a telephone conversation with an LEA official (Dhondy 1987:13), was seen in a *Times* leading editorial as a victim of the “extremism” and “intolerance” in “Labour town halls”. The editorial ominously concludes: “we should eschew the expression ‘loony left’. They are not loony; they know what they are doing and its nothing for the nation’s comfort” (*Times* 21 Nov 86: 21a).

The discourse sketched out here is part of what Seidel describes as a “hegemonic discourse about culture” aimed at the construction of “an organic national authoritarian identity” which draws on Burkean notions of naturalized social divisions and inequalities as necessary for social order and civilization (Seidel 1987b: 39, 47). As Seidel points out, one of the hallmarks of this discourse is the “verbal slippage” between the terms ‘race’, ‘culture’ and ‘nation’ (Seidel 1987b: 46). Within the context of the Cold War—pointedly referenced in several of columns and editorials examined above—the attribution of antiracism as part of a leftist agenda takes on ominous overtones in which the advocacy of antiracism and other forms of social equity is constructed as a form of disloyalty, a betrayal of explicitly racialized notions of the nation, its culture, and its political traditions.

While such a discourse, widely publicized by way of much of the press, was calling into question local council and LEA antiracist policies, such policies also began to be looked at critically from within antiracist circles. Much of this “internal critique” (Mac an Ghaill 1999: 9) or “critical revisionism” (Bonnett and Carrington 1996: 277) only became prominent after the Burnage Report’s rise to public prominence, but elements of the critique were in the air when the Macdonald Inquiry began its work.

‘Internal Critiques’ of Antiracism

What nearly all the elements and arguments of the internal critique have in common is the claim that many of the generally accepted strategies for addressing racism are based on inadequate understandings of lived realities, that they fail to take into account either the ways in which racism is experienced, or the ways in which racism is embraced. Central to the critique is the perception that multicultural or antiracist policies are developed primarily by white academics and theorists by way of abstractions which have little to do with the social realities and experiences in and through which racism is enacted and felt.

Elements of this critique surfaced in the early 1970s in the struggles and conflicts at the Institute of Race Relations (IRR), originally a branch of the Royal Institute of International Affairs which had become an independent body in 1958 (Bourne and Sivanandan 1980; Mullard 1985). The IRR had been responsible for roughly 85 percent of all British publications on ‘race’ up to the early 1970s, its crowning achievement being the massive *Colour and Citizenship* (Rose 1969), the product of a seven year long research and survey project (Bourne and Sivanandan 1980: 335-337). Within the Institute however, there was increasing conflict between staff and administration about the manner in which the IRR constructed ‘Race Relations’ paradigm was based almost exclusively on the notion that racialized groups, and their ability to adapt to British culture and society, were the ‘problem’ and therefore the proper object of study, a paradigm in which the forms and functions of racism in British society as a factor in such adaptations were rarely examined (Bourne and Sivanandan 1980). Although the IRR conflict was resolved in something of a coup which saw the Institute’s librarian, A. Sivanandan, assume directorship of the Institute (Mullard 1985), ‘race relations’ research as primarily a project driven by white

academics abstracting from anthropological and sociological praxis continued outside the Institute. As Gus John, the future Macdonald Inquiry panelist and co-author of the Burnage Report, wrote in 1971, the relationship most of these researchers “have with black groups is that of visitors to the zoo...[t]heir findings are never meant to enable the deprived to take action” (quoted in Bourne and Sivanandan 1980: 340). In short, the ‘race relations’ paradigm which dominated research in the area of ‘race’ and racism, attempted to define and understand the object of the research in terms divorced from actual experiences and lived social relations, served to reify categories of social exclusion, and made no attempt to relate findings to ameliorating strategies.

Similar trends were found to mar developments in multicultural and antiracist policies and practices. Addressing the “new orthodoxy” of multiculturalism in education, Barry Troyna voiced the concern of whether multiculturalism was working in the direction of “emancipation” or “containment” (Troyna 1984). Noting that multiculturalist theories derive from white-centred assumptions about racialized “cultural and/or identity deficiencies”, and about socio-economic advancement being based on educational success, Troyna points out that neither assumption addresses the experience of racialized youths encountering either racism in general, or in the specific context of the job market. The “promotion of minority lifestyles...will do little to remove the barriers which block black youths’ chances of upward social mobility”; yet multiculturalism encourages racialized groups to focus on education as the source of advancement, thus serving to “contain and defuse the potential for resistance” (Troyna 1984: 89-90).

For A. Sivanandan also, officially sanctioned forms and practices such as

multiculturalism and the particular form of antiracism known as Racism Awareness Training (with its inauspicious acronym– RAT), serve to contain the possibilities for resistance by fragmenting opposition and reducing the causes and effects of racism to the level of the personal and the individual, rather than the social and political (Sivanandan 1985). Thus multicultural policies and practices located the problems of racialized groups within the framework of individual ethnicities and identities (Sivanandan 1985: 11-12), while RAT similarly addressed racism in terms of individual attitudes and behaviour (Sivanandan 1985: 20). Within these two sets of practices, the causes and effects of racism were psychologized and pathologized, safely removing the issue from the realm of the political. Racialized groups did not suffer from social inequalities, but from a sense of ethnic dislocation resulting in a crisis of identity, while racism was not an issue of historically structured social hierarchies and inequities, but an individual psychological malaise, to be addressed by methods derived from gestalt therapy in which participants were encouraged to explore and expiate their own racism.

Originally developed by academics in the U.S. for use in the American military, RAT formed the basis for the most common approaches to antiracism in Britain in the early 1980s. While acknowledging that racism had historically structured white societies and institutions (see Katz 1978: 8-10), it focused on the problem of individual racism, effectively holding individuals responsible for social structures and ideologies. Sivanandan pointed to the lack of logic and self-defeatism of an approach which defines racism as systemic but then demands changes within individuals rather than the system (Sivanandan 1985: 20n). Apart from the fact that RAT was obviously incapable of addressing the oppression of racialized groups, Sivanandan noted that it was also incapable of addressing white racism, and might actually contribute to it. By

personalizing racism and presenting racism as so deeply ingrained in the white psyche that the best result was to transform racists into self-aware, “anti-racist racists” (Sivanandan 1985: 19), RAT ran the danger of producing little more than guilt and resentment. Furthermore, just as multiculturalism and ethnic politics had little to do with the experience of racism, RAT had little to do with the experience of racists, and could not account for the varieties of such experience. Since RAT saw all whites as colluding in racism through their enjoyment of the benefits and privileges afforded them by racist hierarchies, it was therefore incapable of addressing the varieties and logics of racism, in particular the racism of the white working class which “is racist precisely because it is powerless, economically and politically” (Sivanandan 1985: 30). For Sivanandan, multiculturalism and RAT were not only ineffectual in addressing racism, but had isolated racism from the larger struggle for social equity– the struggle against racism could only succeed as part of this larger struggle against oppression and inequalities across the social sphere.

The need for the struggle against racism to be grounded and rooted in social realities and experiences is highlighted in Paul Gilroy’s critical comparison of the policies and practices generated by “municipal antiracism” with those of grass-roots organizations (Gilroy 1987: see especially 114-151). Looking specifically at Greater London Council (GLC) activities during its self-proclaimed “Year of Anti-Racism” in 1984 and the activities of more *ad hoc* – and significantly less financed groups and coalitions such as “Rock Against Racism” (RAR), Gilroy finds that the largely symbolic GLC campaign, centred on billboards, pamphlets and buttons, and ascribing to an ungrounded, universalizing and self-contradictory theory of racism compares unfavourably to groups and organizations like RAR which make connections with, and work

through, the experiences and affiliations of sub-cultural formations.

Gilroy traces the origins of such groups as RAR to “an informal and locally based network” of antiracists and antifascists which coalesced in the mid 1970s around the magazine *Race Today*, the Institute of Race Relations publication which had become a focal point for activism following the ‘coup’ described above (and which, coincidentally, featured regular contributions from Burnage Inquiry chair Ian Macdonald and Inquiry co-panelist Gus John). Founded in 1976, RAR used the punk and reggae music and lifestyle trends to articulate the social alienation and disaffection of youth with the struggle against racism and other forms of oppression, eliciting the support of musicians and their audiences, organizing concerts and cultural events under the slogan “Love Music Hate Racism” (Gilroy 1987: 121). It published its own magazine, *Temporary Hoarding*, which adopted the style and layout of shoestring punk fanzines, to promote a message which connected anti-authoritarianism with antiracism, and which actively encouraged– and devoted a great deal of space to– contributions from its readership (Gilroy 1987: 130). Importantly for Gilroy, RAR’s perspective on the struggle against racism was based on ideas of grassroots, collective activism, one which brought people together and articulated their experiences, cultural choices and styles with political struggle.

In contrast, the publicity campaign to heighten awareness of racism during the GLC’s “Year of Anti-Racism”, to which the Council devoted over £800,000, was divorced from people’s experience, actively discouraged collective action, and was completely disarticulated from larger political issues and struggles– it is an antiracism isolated in a “political vacuum” (Gilroy 1987: 145). The billboards which formed the core of the campaign were highly problematic (Gilroy 1987: 138-143), creating images of racism as an autonomous force with no

connection to social relations or institutions (“Let’s kick racism out of town”); which underline racialized differences (a poster featuring an image of London as a vanilla cake containing one ill-fitting chocolate slice, asks “Which slice of the cake are you getting?”); or which promote polarized understandings of racism reminiscent of RAT (“If you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem”). The billboards also lent themselves to publicizing overtly racist views, becoming the frequent target of racist graffiti (Gilroy 1987: 138-9). The fact that the inevitability of such racist dissent had been overlooked by the Council reflected its misplaced assumptions that the concepts of racism and of racialized groups as socially disadvantaged were universally accepted and required no further explanation. Such assumptions were belied by, for example, the defacing of a billboard which asked “Where would Mrs Thatcher have got to if she had been black” with a piece of graffiti which answered, “To the head of the housing queue” (Gilroy 1987: 138). The GLC attempts to provide elaboration on the concept of racism and what to do about it was limited to pamphlets which had to be ordered through the mail from Council offices. The pamphlets define racism as something which “directly affects us all” either as “the victims or the perpetrators” and limited the question of what to do about racism to writing letters of concern to local government councils and the media. Thus racism is defined in the most personal, simplistic and reductive terms, while antiracist activism becomes “a personal quest”, undertaken in private, rather than a social and political issue requiring collective action and involving social relations (Gilroy 1987: 146). As Gilroy concluded, the GLC campaign was based on simplistic and universalist notions of racism ignore racism as a function of social relations and erases the “very complexity of these relations and the extent of difference which exists between the meanings and structures attached to ‘race’ in different social formations”

(Gilroy 1987: 149).

The last critique to be examined here is that of Phil Cohen's 1988 "The Perversions of Inheritance". Like Sivanandan and Gilroy, Cohen questioned the syllogistics of equating whiteness to racism, thereby reproducing and reifying in reverse form the racialized categories on which racism depends, and ignoring the complex intersections of class, gender and other forms of inequality and exclusion (Cohen 1988: 94). Cohen however raised other issues about the implementation and practice of antiracist interventions in education, which problematize the nature of schooling. Specifically, Cohen called into question the efficacy of school based strategies which ignore the dynamics of intersecting social oppressions which in turn impinge on the receptivity of students to issues and concerns advocated in schools. According to Cohen, advocates of antiracism education have tended to accept without question the middle class view of the "civilizing mission" of education, in which supposed middle class norms of reason and tolerance are to be inculcated among those lacking these norms, namely the working classes (Cohen 1988: 87). Often ignored in this view is the resistance of many students, but especially those from the working class, to this mission, and to the medium of schooling itself. The project of antiracism, apart from whether students will buy into its rationalities, is hampered at the start by the probability that "resistances to the pedagogic medium and to its antiracist message become intertwined" (Cohen 1988: 88). Further complications are pointed to by Cohen in terms of who is seen to be delivering the antiracist content: whether the teacher is black or white, male or female, can influence the ways in which the message of antiracism is decoded. Thus a female teacher lecturing on racism may be dismissed on sexist terms, while a white male teacher may be dismissed in class terms, given that the vast majority of teachers are of roughly middle class

backgrounds (Cohen 1988: 85-86).

While the above example assumes that antiracism in education involves some sort of teaching component, the reality is that for all the attention devoted to multicultural and antiracist policies in education, most such policies and practices are stuck at the level of school discipline. Named “the moral force tendency” by Cohen, its aim is “to police language and social behaviour...as a means to impose a form of self-censorship, which interrupts or inhibits the production of racist utterances” (Cohen 1988: 92). Effectively this reduces antiracism to a policy of identifying and punishing racist behaviour, with the result that it becomes “essentially a matter of classroom discipline” and as such, “likely to reinforce strategies of resistance” which students already deploy against other aspects of schooling (Cohen 1988: 92-93). Within the school culture, racism may be silenced in the classroom but might very well continue uninterrupted outside the disciplinary gaze, while antiracism itself becomes part of the authoritarian structure of the school and those who report racist incidents are viewed “sneaks” or “teachers’ pets” (Cohen 1988: 93). Antiracism in education has to take into account such elements in the school culture lest it produce unintended exacerbating consequences. Ultimately it is not simply student resistance to schooling which needs to be taken into account and dealt with, but also “structural resistance to change in both the education system and the wider society” (Cohen 1988: 98).

The ‘internal critique’ of antiracism in the 1980s consisted of theoretical and practical strands, both of which point to the irrelevance of much of antiracism to lived social relations and experience, and the inability of universalist programs and theories to address the complexity of these. In its often simplistic, reductive and polarizing conceptualizations of racism in terms of

perpetrators and victims, and its privileging of racist exclusions over other forms of social inequalities, antiracism merely fed into conditions for resistance and resentment, without ameliorating the conditions for racism. As we shall see, this ‘internal critique’ had been figured prominently in the setting up of the Macdonald Inquiry and the writing of the Burnage Report. It is to the specific circumstances which led to the Inquiry that this examination of the conditions of production of the Report now turns.

Burnage High School, the Murder of Ahmed Ullah and the Macdonald Inquiry

Apart from a few observations I made of the physical surroundings of the school during a brief visit to the site in 1999, this examination of the events and circumstances leading to the setting up of the Macdonald Inquiry is based primarily on the internal evidence provided by the Burnage Report itself. Unassigned page references are to the Report itself, as published under the title *Murder in the Playground* (Macdonald, et al 1989). References to other sources will be noted in the usual manner.

Burnage High School

Burnage High School is located about 8 kilometres south and slightly to the east of the Manchester city centre. It is a split site school, having been formed in 1967 through the amalgamation of Ladybarn Secondary School and Burnage Grammar School. The former now serves as the Lower School and houses forms 1 through 3, while the latter serves as the Upper School and houses forms 4 through Upper Sixth. The two sites are about a kilometre apart, and are separated by Kingsway Road, a busy thoroughfare running north-south.

The Lower School is in what might be described as a lower middle class neighbourhood. The school faces east and the main gate opens onto Parrs Wood Road, which is lined with brick row houses which, like the school building itself, date back to the 1930s. To the north the school borders Ladybarn Park, a fairly large green space, while to the rear of the school– the west side– is Ladybarn Primary School, which in turn backs onto Kingsway Road. To the south the school borders on Briarwood Road, a residential street with housing similar to that on Parrs Wood.

Prior to the events of 1986-7, the most significant year for Burnage High School was 1982. In that year the local education authority (LEA), the Manchester Education Committee (MEC), reorganized its school system. The system of admission was changed from one which in which applicants had to live within the catchment area (a 4.8 kilometer radius around the school), to a system whereby students could apply for places if they had attended one of several designated “feeder” primary schools. Additionally, the reorganization led to the closing down of non-viable schools, curriculum reviews and the establishment of separate sixth form colleges. The intervention of Keith Joseph, then the minister for education, who declared the school to be one of “proven worth”, led to Burnage being exempted from this reorganization. Thus Burnage retained its sixth form, as well as its traditional boys only, grammar school ethos. The exemption also meant that while there were wholesale transfers of teaching staff throughout most of the Manchester schools, Burnage retained most of its staff. The only significant changes to staff were the arrival of deputy head Peter Moors from nearby Levenshulme High School, and the appointment of Dr. Gerry Gough to the headship of the school, putting an end to years of the school being managed by a succession of temporary “acting” head teachers. Gough arrived at

the school with a mandate to introduce a series of MEC reforms, including the introduction of multicultural policies and the abolition of corporal punishment (3-5).

Finally 1982 was significant for a violent incident which presaged the events of 1986-7. On January 21 of that year– before Dr. Gough’s appointment– a student at the upper school was assaulted by six other students. The incident, to which the Report devotes an entire chapter (153-168), took place in the school’s career library during the lunch hour. The victim, who was of Bangladeshi origin, was with a friend, preparing for a career selection interview when six white students entered the room, turned off the lights, and began the assault. The friend managed to escape and alert a staff member who stopped the attack. The victim was sent to hospital with facial lacerations and eventually required surgery to repair a fractured cheekbone. The school, the MEC and the police who were called in to investigate the assault denied racism as a factor in the attack. Although the MEC consulted with community groups with an aim to address levels of violence at Burnage in the weeks following the incident, attempts by these groups to discuss the nature of the assault were dismissed as irrelevant (159).

The Murder of Ahmed Iqbal Ullah

Ahmed Iqbal Ullah was a thirteen year old third form student at Burnage’s lower school. After school on Monday the 15th of September, Ullah was going home across Ladybarn park when he came across Darren Coulburn harassing and bullying another student. Earlier in the day Coulburn had taken the same student’s ball and thrown it on the roof of the school. The student had complained to staff and Coulburn had sworn revenge. Ullah now intervened and a fight ensued in which Ullah was victorious. On the following afternoon, after school, Ullah and

Coulburn had a second fight, again in Ladybarn Park. This time a large group of students gathered to watch and urge the two on. Ullah sustained cuts and bruises, but was winning the fight when older students intervened. Later that evening Coulburn told an acquaintance that if Ullah tried to fight him again he'd stab him. Ullah's mother learned of the fight from her son and urged him to stay home from school the following day. Ullah reassured her, and Mrs Ullah planned instead to go to the school in order to speak with staff. On the morning of Wednesday, the 17th of September, students gathered in the school play area prior to the school's opening. On the way to school Coulburn had shown a friend a knife he was carrying, and repeated his threat to stab Ullah. When Ullah and Coulburn arrived at school, a crowd of students gathered around them, urging them to fight again. Ullah shoved Coulburn who turned, bent over and then lunged and stabbed Ullah in the stomach. As Ullah collapsed on the pavement, Coulburn stood over him and yelled at him, referring to him as "stupid Paki". Coulburn then fled, and was later seen on the grounds of the Upper School, yelling that he'd "killed a Paki" (13-15).

The stabbing had taken place at 8:30 a.m., but it took 35 minutes before Ahmed was taken to hospital in a police car. Although members of staff were alerted almost immediately after the stabbing, there was confusion about whether an ambulance had been called. Nearly 20 minutes elapsed before the ambulance service was in fact contacted. The ambulance service dispatched a car from the wrong station, realized its mistake, and dispatched another from a nearer station. In the meantime Ahmed lay on the pavement in the school yard, moaning and crying out in pain. One staff member ordered a group of boys to form a circle around him to obscure him from other students arriving at school. Another put a blanket over him. A third staff member spotted Darren Coulburn wandering down Briarfield Rd. and escorted him back to

the school. Police arrived on the scene a few minutes before 9 a.m. and, after waiting for the ambulance, took Ahmed to hospital at 9:05, where he was declared dead at 9:10 (15-16).

The Disturbances of February-March 1987

Ahmed Ullah's murder seems to have exacerbated the racialized polarization of students at Burnage. While there were no major incidents for several months, barely suppressed tensions erupted shortly after the conclusion of Darren Coulburn's trial in February, set off by a scuffle between a white student and an Asian student in the Upper School dining hall. The Asian student gathered some friends together to retaliate, but this was put off by the Upper School deputy head Hewitt, who called in the Asian student's family to discuss the matter. The student was told that any future complaints should be brought to Hewitt's office. A few days later a group of Asian students went to Hewitt to complain of white students forming themselves into gangs, presumably with the intent of attacking Asian students. Hewitt's response was to more or less dismiss them, saying that they themselves looked like a gang and were therefore adding to the problem (92).

A few weeks after this, on March 23, two Asian students were assaulted by white students in two separate incidents, one of the victims being the student involved in the dining hall scuffle a month earlier. His older brother— not a student— came to the school the following day and fought with one of his younger brother's attackers. That same day there were rumours that Asian students had prepared a "hit list" of 12 white students who were said to have instigated the original dining hall scuffle in February and, for their own protection, the school took the extraordinary step of keeping those 12 students locked up in various locations through

much of the day– the gym, the dining hall, and a kitchen storeroom (93-94). Eventually, the students were evacuated from the school, smuggled out a back way into a van driven by the father of one of the “listed” students (95). From this point on these students, along with at least three others (99), were effectively excluded from the school, although none were officially expelled. All were forced to write their end of year exams at alternate locations arranged at the last possible moment, arrangements which were sometimes communicated to the students too late to allow them to sit for the exams. Apart from making these arrangements, the school did nothing for the “excluded” students in any sort of official capacity, although a few teachers did volunteer on their own time to provide materials and tutor sessions (109-110).

After school on March 24, the streets around both Lower and Upper Schools were the scene of roving gangs of Burnage students targeting other students for attack. At least five students, all Asian, were assaulted, and at least one was hospitalized (96). On March 25 a large group of Asian students organized a protest march down Kingsway after school and found themselves attacked by a group of white youths– not Burnage students– armed with garage tools. Police intervention resulted in the arrest of two of the students (100).

The Macdonald Inquiry

The idea to hold an inquiry into Ahmed Ullah’s murder originally came from the Greater Manchester Bangladeshi Association (GMBA), which was concerned with the threat posed to its position in the community by the formation of “self-defence” groups such as the Ahmed Ullah Memorial Committee, led by younger and more radical elements in the community (38). The organization of groups such as the Ahmed Ullah Memorial Committee, came about as a result

of the wholly unsatisfactory public meeting at Bangladesh House— a community centre near the school— which was jointly organized by the GMBA and members of the Manchester Education Committee (MEC), in the evening of September 18, the day after the murder. The meeting was attended by Manchester Police Superintendent Anthony Sherratt, who reiterated the police statement of the day before, that “there were no racial overtones” in Ahmed’s murder. When members of the audience, which included many current and former students at Burnage, objected and wished to question the police view, Sherratt told them that since the case was now “*sub judice*” (ie: before the courts) the nature of the case or the motive behind the murder could not be further discussed (37). The anger aroused by both the police statement and the legal threat leveled against further discussion motivated the GMBA to at least appear to be doing something. It entered into a correspondence with the Manchester police, eventually winning something like a retraction— though this retraction was itself later retracted— and called for an “independent judicial inquiry to investigate racism in Manchester schools, Burnage in particular” (60). The city council’s Schools Sub-Committee endorsed the idea, and on 25 September the council announced that it would be setting up an independent, though not a judicial, inquiry into the circumstances at the school. By early October Ian Macdonald, a London barrister and published authority on immigration law, had accepted to lead the inquiry.

By the time he was called on to chair the inquiry, Macdonald had been a successful lawyer for nearly 25 years, and would be named Queen’s Counsel in April of 1988. According to an article in the Guardian (10 May 1988), Macdonald’s texts on immigration law were “standard” in the field, and he came to the attention of the city council by way of several prominent local cases, including that of a Sri Lankan man fighting deportation who had taken

sanctuary in a Manchester church. Macdonald had also represented some of the families of the 13 victims in the New Cross fire, alleged to have been a racist arson attack on a house party in London in 1981. In the early 1970s, Macdonald was a regular contributor and guest editor for *Race Today*, which as noted in the previous chapter, had been a focal point for the development of antiracist networks and organizations (Gilroy 1987: 119). A decade after the Burnage Report, Macdonald was part of the legal team advising the Macpherson Inquiry into the Stephen Lawrence case (Cathcart 2000: 316).

While the GMBA had, in its call for an inquiry, insisted on being able to set the terms of reference (60), the city council promised only that the terms of reference and the composition of the inquiry panel– apart from Macdonald– would be set in consultation with interested parties within the community and the school. Macdonald made consultation the cornerstone of his activities towards setting up the inquiry. In a speech given in July of 1988– a transcript of which appears as the “Forward” to the published version of the Report– Macdonald stressed that “[w]e did everything as a result of discussion and, wherever possible, by consensus and agreement” (x). He held discussions with as many interested parties as he could, ranging from the Ullah family, community organizations, teachers’ unions, the National Association of Head teachers to various members of the city council. It was by way of these discussions that the terms of reference, the other members of the inquiry panel, and the procedures for the inquiry were generated and finalized.

The terms of reference were decided upon by soliciting draft proposals from the various interested parties. Macdonald worked out his own draft from these proposals and then went back to each of the groups to seek their approval. The resulting statement of the terms of

reference were as follows:

to receive evidence, examine, report on and make recommendations in respect of:

1. The extent to which there was a racial aspect to the circumstances and events leading up to and surrounding the death of Ahmed Iqbal Ullah at Burnage High School in September 1986.
2. The extent to which there are racial aspects to the problems of violence and discipline in Burnage High School and other Manchester schools.
3. What can be done to eliminate or reduce racial harassment, and racial violence and racism in schools.

The remaining members of the inquiry panel, Lily Khan, Gus John and Reena Bhavnani, were selected by Macdonald from lists compiled through consultation with the various interested parties. Khan had previously served as a commissioner with the Commission for Racial Equality— a national tribunal set up under the Race Relations Act of 1976— and was an officer of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), having served as the Co-ordinator for the ILEA's Bangladeshi Homeless Families Project and as the director of Asian Studies at the Tower Hamlets Adult Education Institute. Gus John was a former journalist and frequent contributor to *Race Today*, and the co-author— with Derek Humphries— of two studies, one dealing with racism and policing and the other a Department of Education and Science sponsored study of youth and racism in the inner city. John also had extensive experience working for local education authorities (LEAs) in Manchester and London, and was a founder of the Black Parents Movement. Reena Bhavnani was an Oxford sociology tutor and a freelance researcher and consultant in educational matters, specializing in issues around gender and education.

The Inquiry procedures were also set through consultation, which led to the decision to hear evidence in private rather than in public. Not having judicial powers, the inquiry could not subpoena witnesses, and during the consultative process Macdonald was convinced that few who would come forward in the absence of privacy and confidentiality.

The Macdonald Inquiry into Racism and Racial Violence in Manchester Schools was formally launched on 5 May 1987. Hearings were held in the conference room of the Longsight Library on Stockport Road, a little over three kilometres north of Burnage High School and a kilometre southeast of the Ullah family residence on Danecroft Close. The inquiry sat in formal session for 38 days between 21 May and 30 September— no hearings were held in August— during which it heard evidence from 165 witnesses. In addition, the inquiry panel took statements from a further 200 individuals, met informally with numerous groups representing various communities, students and teachers, and visited over a dozen schools in the Manchester area. The panel further commissioned independent researchers to conduct interviews and surveys among students in the Manchester area to gauge the level of racism and violence in schools. The panel also reviewed literature and documents emanating from the city council, the Inspectorate, teachers' unions, the Schools Psychological and Child Guidance Service, and the governors of Burnage and other schools. Notable among those groups which refused to cooperate with the inquiry were the Manchester Police, the Pakistani Workers' Association, and Manchester's Roman Catholic schools.

The Inquiry panel wrote up their Report between October 1987 and January 1988. They briefed the city council on its contents, conclusions and recommendations on January 14 and submitted the full Report by the end of the month (Bullas 1989: xiv). The panel did not see the submission of its Report as being the end of its Inquiry. Among the first of the recommendations in the concluding chapter of the Report is a call for the Inquiry panel to be reconvened in the summer of 1988 to hear evidence on what progress had been made by the Manchester Education Committee in acting on the Report's other recommendations and that,

until such time, the services of the Inquiry's clerks and solicitors be retained (408).

Text: The Burnage Report

In this chapter I present a reading of the text of the Burnage Report. As noted in Chapter 2, this reading consists of a ‘thick’ description of the Report which is made necessary by the contested nature of the Report’s content, meaning and significance. The reading presented here is also an attempt to construct a “preferred” reading of the Report and as such is an argument which makes claims about the intentions of the authors as to the meaning and significance of their Report, using as evidence the text itself.

It would be difficult to do justice to the Burnage Report in any sort of short overview. It is not simply the fact that it passes comment on so many issues, but also that its refusal to offer anything in the way of simple analysis or conclusions does not easily lend itself to synopsis or precis. In this sense it can be an infuriating document, with multiple overlaps, repetitions, and odd choric refrains. It is also a vital and powerful text which captures the conflicts and contradictions familiar to anyone with any experience of schooling— whether as a teacher or a student or an administrator.

In presenting this reading of the Report, I begin with an overview of the Report’s organization

Following this I present the Report's findings, divided into sections reflecting the main areas of the Report's concerns and criticisms: the school's senior management, the interpretation of the murder, racism, antiracism, and concluding recommendations. A final section will present my understanding and interpretation of the Report's recurring themes, indicating my sense of the primary concerns of the authors of the Report. Since all the evidence in this chapter is derived from the Burnage Report itself, all page references are to the Report as published in its entirety under the title *Murder in the Playground* (Macdonald, et al 1989).

The Report may be roughly divided into four sections. The first, which takes up the first 14 of its 33 chapters and a little over a quarter of its 407 pages, is mainly devoted to presenting a narrative of events related to Ahmed Ullah's murder in September 1986, and its aftermath up to March 1987. The second section, which takes up Chapters 15 to 22 and roughly another quarter of the Report examines the particular situation at Burnage High School, especially in terms of the school's policies and management and the experiences of students and teachers. The third section, Chapters 23 to 27, looks at the situation beyond Burnage, presenting evidence, mainly by way of the experiences of students and teachers, of the extent to which racism and violence affects other schools in Manchester. The final section, Chapters 28 to 32, is devoted to analyzing antiracism policies in Manchester and beyond, in terms of their generation and implementation, the reasons behind opposition to them, and recommendations for how to improve them.

These sections are not however entirely discrete and delimited. There is, for example some analysis embedded in the narrative section— notably the Inquiry's conclusions about the extent to which racism was a factor in Ullah's murder in Chapter 5— and a good deal of narrative in the analytical sections. But in general terms the Report follows a trajectory which begins with narrating

events, progresses to analyzing the particular and local context of those events, and then broadens the analysis to take in the larger context of Manchester and, to some extent, Britain in general.

The Findings

School Management

The Inquiry panel concluded from the evidence it heard that the senior management team at Burnage High School bore the greatest responsibility for the events which transpired at the school before and after the murder. Accordingly, among its recommendations was the removal from the school of the Head and his deputies.

The narrative of events which the Report provides of the six month period between Ahmed Ullah's murder and the violent disturbances in and around the school in February-March 1987 illustrates what the Report refers to as the "pattern of non-communication and lack of managerial responsibility" at Burnage (98). As the Report makes clear in its examination of the specific problems with the management at Burnage (Chapters 19-22), this situation did not originate with the trying circumstances of the murder and its aftermath, but was present at least since 1985 and possibly from the appointment of Head teacher Dr Gerry Gough and his deputies in 1982.

The Report acknowledges that Gough, and Deputy Heads Peter Moors and Jack Hewitt, faced an unenviable task upon their arrival: the school had been without a permanent management team for several years; Gough had been mandated by the MEC to bring Burnage in line with reforms ranging from ending corporal punishment, to encouraging child-centred pedagogies and introducing multicultural and antiracist policies and curricula; and most of the teachers at the school were long-serving and many were resistant to any move away from the traditional grammar school ethos which prevailed at Burnage (4-5; 195-197). It was a situation which required sensitivity, consultation, and

a host of other social and managerial skills which the new management team clearly lacked.

The Inquiry heard that Dr Gough was perceived by his staff as being “remote and aloof” (197), manipulative (208), and anxious to control the free circulation of information at the school (199). The senior management seem to have operated along the lines of “divide to rule” strategies in dealing with staff, isolating those teachers it perceived to be opposed to the reforms, and creating an atmosphere of mistrust and divisiveness among staff, as indicated by rumours about “moles” and “spy rings” who reported teacher conversations and attitudes back to the Head (207-212). By the summer of 1985, relations among staff and between staff and management had grown so strained that both parties appealed to the school’s governors to investigate and review the situation. A governors’ sub-committee charged with looking into the matter wrote a report which was so scathing about management that it was repressed for fear that the senior management would feel it had no option but to resign (187). A shorter and “softer” version of the sub-committee’s findings was written instead.

The combined effect of the divisions, factions and mistrust among staff, the alienation of many staff members from senior management, and the lack of communication between senior management and staff, had an impact on the school’s ability to monitor, discipline or ensure the safety of students. The handling of Darren Coulburn prior to the murder illustrates many of the problems at the school.

Coulburn had a history of truancy, rude behaviour, bullying and extorting money from his fellow students, and in the summer of 1985 he had been responsible for a fire which destroyed the art block at the Lower School. Many at the school wanted him expelled for this offence, but at a Governors’ meeting the issue was pushed forward without prior notification and without the

governors being informed of Coulburn's history. Dr Gough argued that the courts had dealt with Coulburn on the arson charge— he had served a one day sentence at detention centre— and that to expel him amounted to punishing him twice for the same offence (9). As an alternative to expulsion Coulburn was to be monitored by deputy head Hewitt. Incredibly, this monitoring program was not announced to any school staff, with the result that no one knew that incident reports involving Coulburn were to be forwarded to Hewitt (10; 41). Two weeks prior to the murder, when Coulburn's class teacher became concerned about his bullying, she spoke to and consulted with her Head of Department, Deputy Head Moors, the Senior Advisory Teacher on disruptive students, the Head of Community Education, an educational psychologist who observed Coulburn in class, Coulburn's social worker and the school's senior teacher (7-8). Yet no word of any of these concerns and consultations made their way to Mr Hewitt, who only sought out and put together all the facts concerning Coulburn two months after the murder (41).

The Report holds senior management largely responsible for the chain of events that led from Ahmed Ullah's murder to the disturbances of February and March of 1987. First, there was a peculiar silence that prevailed at the school. Management's dysfunctional approach to communication— whether with staff, students or parents (192)— was exacerbated by Ahmed Ullah's death. The first school announcement of Ullah's death, read out to students during the last period on the day of the murder, ended with the injunction: "If anyone other than your parents should ask you about this incident – say nothing" (23). The police invocation of *sub judice* rules at the meeting in Bangladesh House the following evening fed into that silence. A part-time teacher not present at the school on the day of the murder found no one would talk to him about it (219). Dr Gough's initial announcements about the murder to students and parents included the misinformation that

Ahmed Ullah had been killed in Ladybarn Park, off school property (23; 34). In the pall of silence that fell over the matter, this mistake was never corrected, with the result that many teachers first learned that the murder had in fact taken place on school grounds only during Darren Coulburn's trial, five months after the event (216).

The major exception to this silence was the school's announcement that "Ahmed Ullah died as a result of racism" (31). The decision to characterize the murder in this way was made during a meeting held in Dr Gough's office within hours of Ahmed Ullah's death (25-30). The Report is highly critical of the circumstances of the meeting and its conclusion.

The meeting came about through the suggestion of the MEC that the school needed to do something to reassure the "community". The Report notes however, that the meeting was unrepresentative of the wider school community, with only three members of the Greater Manchester Bangladeshi Association joining a host of school, MEC and municipal council representatives (29). Furthermore, since no one at the meeting had spoken to any witnesses or the police, and since school management either did not have access to, or withheld details of Coulburn's past history, no one had all the facts in hand, and thus neither the school nor the MEC were in any position to reassure anyone. In the absence of many of the facts in the case, the meeting produced– and committed the school and the MEC to– "a view of the murder that was partial, incomplete and misleading" (29).

Although the Report is critical of both the police denial of any "racial overtones" and of the previous refusal to discuss racism in connection to the 1982 assault in the careers library (see above; the incident is discussed in Chapter 18, pp 156ff), it is equally critical of the school's and the MEC's decision to now characterize Ahmed Ullah's death as racist. As the Report observes, very few white parents or students who spoke to the Inquiry saw the murder as racist and the school and the MEC

“had a responsibility to acknowledge and accommodate that view” (30). The Report compares the school’s affirmation of the murder as racist with the police denial of racism, calling these contradictory conclusions “flip sides of the same coin” (30). Where the police view ignored the experiences and perceptions of racialized groups in the community, the school ignored those of whites in the community for whom Darren Coulburn was simply a bully and a disturbed individual. Unless the school was able to deal with both points of view “it could not possibly begin to allay the fears of either group” (30). The failure to do so, led to polarization and increased tensions at the school, particularly when subsequent events, and the school management’s inept responses, fostered among the white students a sense of blame and collective guilt in the murder while doing nothing to allay the sense of threat felt by many students as a consequence of the Ahmed Ullah’s death.

The first of these subsequent events was the school’s response to Ahmed Ullah’s funeral, set for September 23. The school planned to close at lunchtime to allow students to attend, and buses were hired to transport students to the cemetery. But permission slips were not sent home with students until the day before the funeral (50). Teachers did not learn that their attendance at the funeral was compulsory until they arrived at school on the day of the funeral, resulting in a panic about appropriate dress— a teacher was dispatched at the last moment to buy head scarves for the women teachers (51). Finally, as students gathered in the hall to board the buses, it was suddenly announced that only Asian students were to attend the funeral. This decision was apparently reached by head teacher Dr Gough without consultation with any of his staff, or the MEC representative who was at the school at the time. Dr Gough took this decision after hearing from one of the school governors who apparently had heard from a taxi driver that there might be violence at the funeral (52-3). In the event there was no violence, and white students from another school attended the funeral

without incident. The Report criticizes the lack of consultation behind this decision as well as the apparent lack of communication and organization behind the plans to attend the funeral. It also notes that the barring of students other than those of Asian background prevented many of Ahmed's friends from attending his funeral, and further polarized students along racialized lines. White students, the Report says, must have linked the school's characterization of the murder as a racist event with being barred from the funeral and thus "reinforced a feeling...that they were somehow to blame" (52).

The Report reserves its greatest criticism of senior management in relation to its responses to the disturbances of February-March 1987. As we have seen, early on in that sequence of events several Asian students met with the Deputy Head Hewitt to express their concerns about white students forming themselves into gangs. Hewitt's response was to tell the Asian students that they looked like a gang themselves and were thus part of the problem. When he later addressed an assembly on the danger of gangs and urged students to bring their grievances to the administration, he had already demonstrated the futility of such action to those students who had done exactly that (92).

Senior management was seen to be doing little to address the violence in the school and on the surrounding streets in March. Groups of teachers took it upon themselves to patrol the streets after school, and thereby broke up several incidents and, on one occasion, took a student to hospital (95-96). The Manchester Schools Inspectorate assigned two youth workers to the school who the Report credits with diffusing much of the tension by organizing discussion groups (101ff). A community relations worker assigned to the school by the Manchester Council for Community Relations (MCCR) worked with students to generate ideas for improving the situation (106). The students themselves organized an *ad hoc* students' council (104). Even though these were the only

developments which seemed to ease tensions somewhat, senior management was dismissive of them: when one of the youth workers attempted to photocopy a list of student generated suggestions for improving the situation, he was stopped by Dr Gough who told him that ““We have had enough of that really now. We are going to start curtailing those sorts of meetings”” (107).

The Report is especially critical of the school’s handling of the situation involving the dozen or so students who had to be evacuated from the school after rumours that they were on a “hit list”. All were effectively permanently excluded from the school, in spite of the fact that the school had no evidence of any wrongdoing on their part. While the school took the position that these students had chosen not to return out of fear for their own safety, the school never took any measures to ensure their safety. No action was ever taken against the students who had threatened them. When one parent spoke with one of the deputy heads about his son coming back to write his exams, he was told that the choice was between writing exams or having no son (99). The school did little to accommodate the excluded students and most contact between the school and these students occurred by way of the youth workers or by a few teachers acting on their own initiative. The school did make arrangements for the excluded students to write their exams at another school, but letters informing them of these arrangements were only mailed out the day before exams started (109).

The authors of the Report conclude that the school’s handling of the March events opened the school to even greater possibilities of increased tension and violence, and that it was “a matter of great fortune that the handling of these events by the school management at Burnage did not lead to far more widespread eruptions of communal violence outside in the community” (112). The failure to deal with either the alleged hit list or the excluded students is viewed by the authors of the Report as blatant discrimination and a substitute for failing to deal with the grievances of Asian

students (111). All in all, senior management failed to deal with either the general racism and violence at the school, or with Darren Coulburn in particular. This failure resulted in a situation in which the murder of Ahmed Ullah became possible. After the murder the school did little to acknowledge the pre-existing situation, did little to address the current situation, and what it did do contributed to the further deterioration of student relations.

Interpretation of the Murder

In its examination of the circumstances of the murder, the Report draws three main conclusions. First, that by September 1986 Darren Coulburn should not have been attending Burnage High School. While there was no indication that Coulburn was likely to kill anyone, there were sufficient grounds in terms of his behaviour and history to have had him removed from the school and placed elsewhere, and it should have been clear to senior management that the school “did not have the resources or the capacity” to deal with him (377; see also 41-2).

Second, the Report states that there was no evidence to suggest a set of circumstances or conditions peculiar to Burnage which contributed to the murder, which “could have happened in any number of other schools in Manchester or the United Kingdom” (46). Third, the Report finds that the murder was racist, not in terms of Darren Coulburn’s primary motives, but in terms of the context in which the murder took place. The distinction is, for the Report, of great significance, since it represents a kind of middle way between the conflicting views within the school and the community about whether the murder was racist or not.

The Report begins its analysis by distinguishing between *racism* and *racialism*, with *racism* being defined as a “a philosophy of ‘race’ superiority”, which can become “part of the way in which

society as a whole is organised”, while *racialism* refers to categories of action or behaviour motivated by racist beliefs (43). The Report notes that while racist actions assume conscious racist motives, acts of racism do not necessarily require either conscious racist beliefs or motives. An event may be defined as racist when “the culture and context” in which it took place “reflects the racist hierarchy in which we live and perceive ourselves” (44). A racist act, therefore, is not necessarily one which is consciously and singularly motivated by a belief in racist doctrine, but one which is influenced by– even unconsciously (44)– the pervading ethos of a racist society.

The Inquiry found no evidence that Darren Coulburn “stabbed Ahmed Ullah because he was Asian or because he was looking for a ‘Paki’ to kill” (44). Coulburn’s motives were not racist, and the Inquiry panel– in contrast to the simplistic and one dimensional conclusion reached by school management– insist on the “complex motivations” and circumstances that led to the murder. Coulburn was “a highly disturbed boy, a bully, and a person of low self esteem, who had no doubt been humiliated by Ahmed” (44), and the school culture was one suffused with violence (127-131)– which may have been exacerbated by the all male environment (123-5)– in which it was not unusual for boys to arm themselves with knives; (130-1; 378). Yet the Report concludes that the murder was racist in the sense that it took place not only within “the racist culture in which we live in Britain” (46), but also within the specific racist culture of Burnage High School, in which students of Asian origins were routinely devalued, and “more often identified by white students as ‘Pakis’ than by their individual names” (45).

The Report links the racist atmosphere of the school to Coulburn’s reference to Ahmed Ullah as a “stupid Paki” at the moment of stabbing him. The authors of the Report find this statement highly significant in the context of the school culture. Noting that Coulburn was seen at the Upper

School shouting that he'd "killed a Paki", the Report continues:

It is significant that he did not say: "Ahmed thought he was strong and could deal with me. I showed him who was boss around here." That would be the utterance of a defeated bully getting his own back by playing dirty. But he does not even say: "I killed Ahmed." He depersonalises him. "I've killed a Paki" depersonalises Ahmed and turns him into a thing which is known to be downgraded and fair game within the culture of racism in the society. (45)

It was this racist devaluation and depersonalization which allowed the murder to take place: the authors of the Report "are quite sure that if Ahmed had been white, there would not have been this murder" (44). In the absence of racism the conflict between Coulburn and Ullah, and its escalation to murder, simply would not have occurred:

Racism was one of the vital ingredients that brought these two boys together in that fatal encounter. Racism was a factor that led Darren Coulburn to bully the smaller Asian boys in Ladybarn Park; racism was behind their appeal to Ahmed for help, and his response; racism no doubt fuelled Darren Coulburn's bitter response to his own humiliation by Ahmed and added potency to his vow for revenge; and in the fatal moment Ahmed lost all individual identity and became a symbol of his race— a "Paki". (45)

While racism was not Coulburn's primary motive in the sense that a personal and generalized "race" hatred drove him to kill any person of South Asian heritage, racism suffused the culture in which he lived and structured the social hierarchy into which he was born, heightened his sense of humiliation at having been beaten up by Ahmed Ullah, and— at least in his own mind— sanctioned his ultimate revenge.

The Report's analysis here is historically important and, as we shall see, in concert with its later critique of "moral" antiracism and the theory behind the Race Awareness Training programs of the late 1970s to mid 1980s. Both were informed by a view of racism as a personal moral failing which took little account of the ways in which a society might be historically structured by— and its cultural commonsense understandings informed by— racism. It was a view of racism which denied its power to organize societies except in extreme cases such as Nazi Germany or Apartheid South Africa, where the legal and political apparatus of the state could clearly be seen to be operating on

the basis of racist doctrine. In the absence of such explicitness, racism was (and still often is) seen primarily as an issue of individual conscience and morality— hence the continued reaction in many circles against the concept of “institutional racism” as reflected in press responses to the Macpherson Report of 1999. In its analysis of the murder, The Burnage Report rejects the notion that racist crimes require, by definition, clear and conscious racist beliefs as motive, while shifting the subject of analysis and inquiry from the individual actor to the context in which the action took place.

The Report adds that it is essential to recognize both that racism was a factor in the murder, and that it was a more complex event in which other factors played a role. On the one hand, to deny the racist context of the murder— as the Manchester police did— is to “do away with the need to examine...the racial structures which make Asian boys a suitable target for the attention of bullies, which imbue boys like Ahmed Ullah with a particular sense of injustice, and which produce the tragic response of a Darren Coulburn” (46). It is also to alienate racialized segments of the community and to invalidate their daily experience (46). Yet to interpret the murder as only racist event— as the school did— without acknowledging the other factors in the case, resulted in the alienation of many white students and parents for whom Coulburn was, first and foremost, a highly disturbed individual. As the Report points out, it is one thing for racialized communities to view the murder primarily as a racist act or for the white community to view it as the act of a disturbed boy and a bully. It is another thing for agencies and authorities like the police, the school, the MEC or the city council, all of which have a responsibility to accommodate the groups and segments in the wider community, to define the murder one way or another (29; 46).

Racism

As we have seen, the Inquiry panel judged Ahmed Ullah's murder as an event involving a complex of circumstances and motivations in which the racist context of the school environment and the surrounding society was a key factor. While this context is only alluded to in the analysis of the murder, the Report devotes a great deal of space to establishing the racist context of Burnage High School, the immediate surrounding community, and in the wider community of Manchester and other schools under its authority. Chapter 17 looks at racism in and around Burnage, Chapter 22 examines the experiences of racialized teachers at Burnage, and Chapters 23-27 deal with racism within other Manchester schools. The evidence for Chapters 17 and 23-26 was gathered through statements given during the formal Inquiry sessions, interviews with students and teachers conducted outside the Inquiry hearings, and a survey of 902 students at three Manchester schools. This evidence is presented in the form of short quotes and longer summaries of the interviews, as well as a report by the survey team (Chapter 26) which analyzes the data it collected. Chapter 27 examines and provides lengthy quotation from a series of documents relating to a violent incident at a Manchester school in 1984 which raises questions about the way schools and local authorities define and deal with such incidents. It is worth pointing out that apart from the narrative section outlining the events at Burnage, this attempt to establish the nature and the extent of racism at Burnage and other Manchester schools takes up the largest portion of the Report, and this is reflected in the concluding summary chapter leaked to the Manchester Evening News, where the issue takes up 43 of 146 paragraphs (pars 38-41; 63-66; 72-106).

Although evidence of racism is, for the most part, presented in the form of individual quotations and accounts of personal experience which makes clear the impact of racism on

individuals, the Inquiry panel reiterate the point made in its analysis of Ahmed Ullah's murder: that racist behaviour and action must be seen less in terms of the beliefs and intentions of the perpetrators, but primarily in terms of the social context in which it takes place. As the Report states in its "working definition", racism "is more than just a set of ideas or beliefs...[it is]...part of the way in which a society as a whole is organised...whose most powerful economic and social institutions are organised on, or in effect act on or reflect, the principle that one race is superior to another..." (43).

It is with this understanding that the Report observes:

In any school population we would expect to find examples of racial intolerance and bigotry on much the same scale as exists outside in the community. Teachers and students are no more immune to these social forces than other sections of the population. (133)

That schools are full participants in whatever social relations prevail in the wider community is perhaps an obvious point, but one which needs to be made, particularly in light of common claims, in the press and elsewhere (including one parent who addressed the Inquiry, see p 325), that attempts to address racism in schools actually produce racism. Racism is no more produced within the walls of a school than those same walls can prevent racism from entering into the school. Accepting the fact that schools exist within, and take part in, the social forces and relations of the surrounding community, society, and culture, raises questions of how schools deal with issues arising outside the school which nevertheless have an impact on the school itself– questions which trouble traditional notions of the limits of schools' responsibility and jurisdiction.

In establishing the local context of Burnage, the Report presents a series of direct quotations from various members of the community about what life is like in the community. The quotations reveal that to be a part of a racialized sector of the community is to be either subject to, or endure the threat of, violence, harassment and abuse. It is to walk daily past walls inscribed with racist graffiti like "Paki go home" (134), or to have threatening leaflets from "Patriots (Anti-Paki

Division)” stuffed through mail slots (136). It is to have encountered violence and abuse so often that children are afraid to play outside (135) or parents are afraid to let them do so (133). It is to have stones thrown at you, to have racist epithets hurled at you by strangers, to be attacked or insulted on buses or to find one’s children in the bath “scrubbing themselves to make themselves white and trying to take the curls out of their hair” (134).

The racism of the surrounding community was, not surprisingly, reflected among members of staff at Burnage, some of whose words and actions, directed at both students and colleagues were reported to the Inquiry. These range from common reference to all students of South Asian origins as “Pakis”, to such statements as “they should all be sent back to Pakistan” and “It’s us English against the Pakis” (shouted at students during a school cricket match); to acts like knocking the turban off the head of a student, several teachers daubing black shoe polish onto the face of a colleague known to support antiracism, and the wearing of pig badges by a large group of teachers following the suggestion that turkey rather than pork be served at the school’s Christmas dinner so that Muslim boys could take part (140-141).

Although the Inquiry found no evidence to indicate that such behaviour was widespread or that racism dominated relations among staff or between staff and students, the Report suggests that behaviour of this kind in any British school is “almost inevitable” given the racism which “permeates the whole society” (142). Accepting that such behaviour is “inevitable”, the Report finds “unforgiveable” not the behaviour but the general failure within school cultures and bureaucracies to address such behaviour in ways other than the straightforwardly punitive. The Report links such failure to the tendency to deny that such attitudes and behaviour are present; or to assume that such attitudes are “irredeemable”, and an “ineradicable part of the individual personality and that people

do not change”; and to assume that all the social and professional relations of individuals who exhibit racist attitudes and behaviour must be dominated by racism and, as such, necessarily renders such individuals incapable of professional or responsible conduct (142). Such denials and assumptions which seems to reflect the thinking of the Burnage management team, results in the issue of teacher racism being left unaddressed– it not acknowledged, it is assumed that nothing can be done about it anyway, and students are left to suffer and offending teachers are left to drift. That teachers identified as racist may yet have positive contributions to make is suggested by the Report’s account of a black teacher, new to Burnage, who was warned off certain racist members of staff but found that it was some of those same staff members who were most helpful and supportive of her, more so than many of those who identified themselves as supporting antiracism (233).

In presenting students’ experiences of racism at Burnage, the Report offers numerous quotes and summaries of statements taken formally in the Inquiry or through interviews undertaken by the Inquiry’s researchers and Inquiry panelist Gus John. These indicate not only the prevalence of racism as a dominating factor in some students’ experience of schooling, but also the extent to which such experience is, if reported, unaddressed, feeding into a reluctance to report incidents at all– the phrase “he reported it to a teacher but nothing further happened” commonly concludes the Report’s summaries of incidents recounted during the interviews (142-151). These range from daily or weekly incidents of racist name-calling, to less frequent– though not uncommon– incidents of robbery, bullying, extortion and assault.

This largely anecdotal evidence of the situation at Burnage is supported by further evidence, both anecdotal and statistical, gathered from other Manchester schools, which indicates that Burnage is far from unique in terms of levels of racism among students and staff in spite of having antiracist

commitments and policies—a fact underlined by a teacher at another school who told the Inquiry that “what happened at Burnage could have happened at any Manchester secondary school; it certainly could have happened at our school...” (251). The interviews with students and teachers at several other schools repeat the pattern of verbal and physical abuse of racialized students, sometimes “legitimized” by the behaviour of teachers. One teacher reported overhearing colleagues laughing at recent classroom incidents, in one of which a teacher had referred to a black student working out a math problem as “Black Adder”, and in another a black student hoping to join a sports team was told by a teacher that he was sure to make it because “we need someone to chalk the score up on”. When the reporting teacher objected to these stories, the response was, “it’s people like you who cause racial problems” (248).

The random, anecdotal evidence is supported by the evidence of a survey, commissioned by the Inquiry, of the attitudes and experiences of 902 students—roughly half in First Year and half in Fourth Year—at three Manchester schools. The survey found that between the three schools, 71-80% of racialized students reported being the target of name-calling, as opposed to 64-65% of white students (268). 70-79% of racialized males reported having fights picked with them, while the figure for white males was 61-63% (270). While girls generally reported fewer fights (43%), the figures for girls of south Asian origin was within the range of racialized boys at 70%. Racist name calling had been heard by 77% of all students, with figures rising to 84% for fourth year students (272), while 48% of all students reported having witnessed fights they perceived as “racial” (274). The survey also reflects the low levels of reporting incidents to the school which was seen in the case of Burnage, with roughly one-sixth of all incidents being reported to teachers, and a general perception among students that teachers either did not respond to complaints, or that the responses neglected

to sort out the origins, or the rights and wrongs of the incidents and conflicts which produced the complaints (281).

This last point is examined in more detail in the case of the violent outbreak which occurred at Plant Hill High School in 1984, which is the subject of the Report's Chapter 27. The incident involved a "school invasion" of up to 30 youths who entered Plant Hill, became involved in physical altercations with staff members, entered several classrooms and did damage to school property. Eighteen youths were arrested and charged with causing an affray. The youths were, according to the school's Head, "of West Indian or Pakistani origin" but, as he wrote in his report to Manchester's Chief Education Officer, "we have been at great pains to ensure that it should be seen as a criminal act not as a racial act" (288). As it turned out, the "invasion" of Plant Hill was in fact "racial": it was the culmination of a series of assaults on a black student from another school, at the hands of a group of white students at Plant Hill who were known to frequent a youth centre suspected of being a focus of National Front activities. The victim of these assaults had been dating a white girl who had formerly been friendly with one of the assailants. One of the assaults took place outside the victims's school, was broken up by staff members, but the Head refused to allow the police to be called in (295). Following another attack, the victim did contact police and identified his assailants to them but was told that there was little they could do— that it would be his word against the that of his assailants (289). Eventually a group of the victim's friends went to the youth centre to seek revenge against the assailants, leading to a pitched battle outside the centre. The group then continued on to Plant Hill, and it was only with their entry into the school that police and educational authorities became involved in the case. When the full story came to light, the Manchester LEA announced its intention to provide mitigating evidence to the legal defence of the arrested youths.

This was met by bitter complaint from the two schools involved, and from the teachers' union. The latter argued that in lending support to the arrested youths, the LEA would not only be failing to support its employees, but would "involve the school in racial incidents totally outside its jurisdiction" (296).

For the Report the case of Plant Hill demonstrates the impossibility of limiting a school's "jurisdiction" only to what takes place within the walls of the school, when the possibility exists that "racist gangs...engage in racist attacks and then retreat to the relative safety of the classroom" (296). The Report notes that the refusal of the victim's school to involve police, police inaction once they were contacted, the non-action taken by any of the authorities against the perpetrators of the original assaults, and the subsequent refusal to entertain anything but the criminal element of the "invasion" of Plant Hill,

demonstrates, yet again, how difficult it is for young black students to look to established structures for action in confronting the racism they experience in their communities...The gulf between the lived experience of racism of young black people and those in authority whose over-riding concern seems to be to outlaw that experience is one that breeds a violent response to racist violence. (297)

The Report underlines the parallels between this incident and the disturbances at Burnage during February-March 1987, where the failure of the authorities to address racism "must inevitably lead to groups of black or asian youths organising themselves for self-defence" which lead in turn to the violent confrontations experienced at Plant Hill and Burnage (298).

Antiracism

Although the Burnage Report became widely known and publicized as a critique of antiracism, only three of its 33 chapters engage in this critique: Chapter 19 examines antiracism policies at Burnage, Chapter 28 looks at how antiracism policies are generated at the level of the

Manchester municipal government, and Chapter 30 presents a brief overview of “The History of Anti-Racist Education”. The corresponding sections in the summary chapter which was leaked to the *Manchester Evening News* amounted to 22 of the 146 paragraphs that make up the summary. Yet it was this part of the summary which, as we will see, caught the attention of the press. In contrast, the press tended to ignore the final 19 paragraphs of the summary which outline the contents of Chapters 31 and 32, which deal with positive examples of antiracism in schools and the Inquiry’s recommendations for building on these. The authors of the Report clearly understood– as the press did not– that there were “antiracisms”, which included a wide range of approaches, policies and practices, not all of them effective.

The basis of the Report’s critique of much that takes place in schools under the name of antiracism is simply that does not work. As the Report observes, following Burnage’s commitment to multiculturalism and antiracism in 1982,

business proceeded as usual. Smaller Asian boys continued to be picked upon and humiliated and physically attacked, boys and teachers continued to refer to Asians as ‘Pakis’, and the fights and the intolerable level of violence persisted. (166)

The Burnage Report sees the failure of antiracism policies at Burnage and elsewhere– all the other schools investigated by the Inquiry had antiracist policies as prescribed by the MEC– as being due, at least in part, to the fact that antiracism at these schools, and even at the level of the MEC and the City Council, consists largely of “symbolic gestures” which are “meaningless and can clearly reinforce racism” (347).

The foundation of antiracism in most schools– and in the local authority– is the policy statement. The Report demonstrates however, that in many cases such policy statements are inadequate, subsequently ignored in practice, or both. Burnage’s policy statement, for example, contains statements about the school’s recognition of its responsibility to “combat racism” as part

of “promoting the aims and ideals of a multicultural society” but implicitly denies the presence of racism within the school, acknowledging only the existence of “racial discrimination within the community outside the school” (173-174). On the other hand the Report cites the MEC’s policy statement as an example of a “punitive rather than informative model”, in which the consequences for racist behaviour among staff is spelled out– “disciplinary action possibly leading to dismissal”– but which fails to define either racism or what may constitute racist behaviour (303). Apart from the inadequacy of policies that deny the existence of the issue that the policy is intended to address, or which fail to properly identify such issues, there is the further problem of what happens to the policy once it is drafted and adopted.

The Report points out that one of the cornerstones of the MEC’s antiracism policy was the mandatory monitoring of racist incidents (309-311). At various times the MEC issued directives to schools on reporting procedures– all racist incidents were to be recorded in logbooks kept at schools for this purpose, and were also to be written up as reports which were to be sent to the MEC (see Appendix F; 493-505). Such a system depends on compliance through several levels of school and local authority bureaucracies, beginning with students who, as we have seen, are reluctant to report incidents to teachers. Assuming at least some similar reluctance among teachers to fill out reports, or among Heads to send them along to the local authority, the potential for under reporting is enormous, even before taking into account the suggestion of one city councillor that “things get lost...sometimes in the system” (310). As one of the Inquiry’s researchers stated with regard to evidence collected through interviews with students, the number of incidents reported in the interviews “are so far in excess of the number reported under the City Council’s procedure for notification of incidents of racial harassment/violence as to make any comparison meaningless”

(150).

At the level of individual schools, the Report notes, there are similar problems with policies being either ignored or unimplemented. The Inquiry heard from teachers who were unable to obtain copies of the school policy (248). Others reported that although their schools had a “strong policy commitment” to antiracism, “in practice this wasn’t so” (250).

The Report also critiques the consultation practices that generate or maintain such policies. The Report cites the creation of “Ethnic Minority Advisory Groups” (EMAGs) at both the level of the local authority and at individual schools such as Burnage as examples of symbolic rather than substantial consultation. At Burnage the EMAGs were set up largely as a way of complying with a Home Office ruling that required evidence of consultation within the community before releasing Section 11 funding to individual schools (177).¹ Although the Home Office had not stipulated the manner of consultation, and Dr Gough had been warned off EMAGs by a colleague who specifically cited past experience which showed them to be divisive and alienating to white parents (178), Burnage followed the example set by the local authority and the City Council which had similar arrangements for consulting with the “community” (311-315). At Burnage the EMAGs were set up by the school on strict “racial” lines, with two separate groups, one each for Asian and Afro-Caribbean parents. An indication of how these consulting groups might have looked if parents themselves had formed them is provided by the fact that within a year of their creation in 1986, the two groups decided to merge into one and some within the new group expressed the hope that white

¹ “Section 11” refers a provision in the Local Government Act of 1966 which allocated central government funding—over and above local authority funding—for schools with significant “immigrant” populations, and was intended to be used for programs, such as ESL classes, to aid in the assimilation or integration of students from immigrant families, but over the years many schools had come to see and use the Section 11 provision as funding for meeting local authority multicultural and antiracist requirements.

parents would also eventually join (181).

The Report criticizes the EMAGs on several counts relating to both the specifics of their employment at Burnage and more generally. At Burnage EMAG meetings were announced by letters passed to students in class, with the result that some students received letters while others did not. This created confusion on the part of students and teachers, and forced teachers to ‘racially’ identify students in order to know who was to receive the letters and who was not (180). Furthermore, the EMAGs were formed specifically to consult with the school over matters relating to antiracism, reinforcing the perception that white parents “have no business in the development of anti-racist education”, a notion which the Inquiry panel strongly rejected (182). On more general terms, relating to both their use at Burnage and the municipality, the EMAGs are criticized for being largely symbolic and having little substantial influence on policy. At neither Burnage, the MEC or the city council were EMAGs consulted over agendas— their real function was to create the illusion of consultation to rubber-stamp previously made decisions (181; 314).

Another indication of the symbolic nature of antiracism in Manchester schools is, according to the Report, its limited impact on curriculum. In the case of Burnage and other Manchester schools, antiracism education affected only peripheral areas of the curriculum, such as bringing in peripatetic teachers from Manchester’s Community Languages department for optional classes in Urdu, or hiring part-time teachers of “Ethnic Music”: antiracism did “not seem to have been considered at all within the formal curriculum” (167). This, in spite of the fact that, at Burnage, the school’s Community Education Department was heavily stocked with Section 11 staff and charged with developing areas of antiracist curricula.

This use of the Community Education Department at Burnage comes in for special criticism

in the Report. It turned the department into a *de facto* antiracism unit which had the effect of marginalizing antiracism. As the Report notes, Section 11 staff under the aegis of Community Education tended to be seen as separate from the rest of the school staff, who viewed them with some suspicion: they often had no regular classes assigned to them; they were seen as having been “imposed on the school from above”; and as being concerned only with “minority” issues (176). Thus Community Education came to be seen as something apart from the mainstream of the school, its mandate to deal with antiracism was seen to relieve other members of staff from taking any responsibility for issues around racism, and its main point of contact was with racialized segments of the community, thus guaranteeing the non-involvement of white members of the community in antiracism. As the Report observes, the “notion of ‘community’ as necessarily embracing the white community, and multi-cultural as including the culture of white working class people appears to have been ignored” (181).

As we have seen, the Report not only views these policies and initiatives as being largely symbolic, but also as potentially reinforcing racism. They do so by, on the one hand, being insubstantial and having little impact on existing relations while, on the other hand, giving the appearance that “ethnic minorities” are being catered to in ways which the white community is not. This is especially problematic when much of the white community, as in the case of Burnage, is itself facing economic deprivation and class discrimination.

The Burnage Report points out, citing a plea from a group of Head teachers at schools in poor working class districts in Manchester for some kind of assistance in meeting the needs of their students and their schools (307-308), that while Section 11 funding exists for schools with large “immigrant” or “ethnic” populations, no such funding exists, at either the local or the national level,

to assist schools in areas of economic deprivation (308). This lack is compounded by the absence of any reference to class in any of the city's or the LEA's anti-discriminatory/social equity policies: in spite of the fact that the egalitarian thrust of the 1944 Education Act, which provided much of the impetus and justification behind antiracism, was originally aimed at class and economic inequities, in the mid 1980s reference to class discrimination was seen as too politically controversial to win all party consensus in the city council (306). According to the Report, this refusal to recognize class as factor in social inequality negates any potentially positive effect of antiracism:

To deal with sex and race, but not with class, distorts those issues...All grievances...become issues of racism or sexism, even when their causes are much more complex. This ostrich-like analysis of the complex of social relations leaves white working class males completely in the cold. They fit nowhere... Their interests as a group are nowhere catered for. That, surely, is a recipe for division and polarisation, particularly in the area of anti-racist policies. (306)

This is how it is possible for antiracism policies, often ineffectual in addressing the causes and effects of racism, to end up reinforcing rather than ameliorating racism. In effect, an antiracism which does not take account of the complex intersections of a wide range of existing social inequalities, ends up being perceived as privileging some disadvantaged groups over others, leading to resentment and feeding into racist responses to those inequalities.

The Report examines this issue further in its examination of the "backlash" against antiracism and multiculturalism in Chapter 29, the bulk of which is made up of a case study of the formation of an anti-antiracist parents' group in Manchester called Parents' English Education Rights (PEER). The Report says of a founder of PEER— who is quoted at some length— that since her own schooling had provided her with "little basis on which to root her own identity as a white working class woman", she sees the relatively mild multiculturalist approach taken at her son's school as "catering directly to the needs and preferences of Asian students, thus indicating the extent to which they and their culture are valued...in sharp contrast to her own experiences...in school" (337). Among many

such parents, the Report suggests, such perceptions produce, not questions about the usefulness of their own education, but a resentment which, when articulated with sensationalist stories in the tabloids about how multiculturalism and antiracism deprive “English” children of an “English” and “Christian” education (322), cause them to seek the restoration of “some nostalgically remembered version” of their own education and have it imposed on their own children (337).

According to the Report then, many antiracism policies and practices consist of largely symbolic and ineffectual gestures, are viewed in isolation from the complexity of social relations and are generated without real input and consultation with all elements within the community, resulting in them having little impact on racism or its effects and being potentially counterproductive factors in the struggle against racism. The Report also argues that policies and practices of this kind are in part due to a fundamentally flawed theorization of racism which better suits the workings of bureaucratic institutions than it does people’s experiences of racism.

The Report suggests that this flawed theory gained wide acceptance in local bureaucracies by way of the Scarman Report into the 1981 “disorders” which affected many inner city areas throughout Britain. Scarman saw “racial disadvantage” as a central cause of the disturbances, but rejected the notion of institutional or societal racism, seeing racism instead as a matter of individual prejudice— thus the poor relations between the police and racialized communities were the result of the prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory actions of a few individual police officers, and not an effect of an institutional racism which permeated the entire organization and practice of policing. The Scarman Report and its recommendations provided the impetus for many local authorities to adopt equal opportunity policies, recruit ‘minorities’, and fund ‘racism awareness training’(RAT) programs (346).

The Report points out that underlying many of the local authority initiatives is an understanding of racism similar to that of Scarman: that racism is manifested primarily in individual racial prejudice; that such prejudice is immoral since it creates “racial disadvantage” which can lead to social disorder; that the solution to this requires white people to recognize their individual prejudices as a first step to eliminating their racism, and that victims of racism have a special insight and should therefore be consulted in issues concerning racism (346). In practice, it is a set of understandings that lends itself to the bureaucratic management of racism and allows antiracism to become a “very institutionalized process...part of a ‘top-down’ approach” (346). Consultation can be managed without broadening political representation or power, directives can be issued, RAT courses can be made mandatory, and the moral dimension of racism does not disturb the political consensus of city councils.

The Report refers to this collection of understandings as “moral anti-racism”, in which racism is isolated in “a moral vacuum...totally divorced from the more complex reality of human relations in the classroom, playground or community” (347). It produces the ‘RAT’ model which in practice, the Report says, has been “an unmitigated disaster”: it crudely reinforces, though inverts, ‘racial’ categories, seeing people as either white and racist, or black and morally superior; it generates only guilt and resentment among whites, while having no effect on prevailing inequities; and it assumes a “uniform access to power by all whites and a uniform denial of access and power to all blacks”, an assumption made possible only by ignoring factors such as class and gender in the construction of social and political equations (347-348).

It was this set of understandings which, according to the Report, informed Burnage High School’s exclusion of the white working class community in questions to do with antiracism. The

Report, quoting Dr Gough's view that white students and parents at Burnage did not have "the particular experience" required for participation in these issues, states that the tensions and polarization which occurred at the school after Ahmed Ullah's murder was at least in part due senior management's adherence to 'moral antiracism' which left white parents and students "beyond the pale" (348).

Recommendations

The Report's findings can be summed up in three main points. First, the racism which pervades British society is reflected in its schools. Second, antiracism policies at many LEAs and schools consist of mostly symbolic gestures and are often founded on theories which conceptualize racism in simplistically moralistic and individual terms, rather than as a central factor in social relations and institutionalized social and political inequalities. Such an antiracism is not only ineffectual in addressing racism as it is experienced, but is counterproductive in its reinforcing of racial categories and in encouraging among other disadvantaged segments of society the perception that racialized groups are benefitting from "special treatment". Third, and this is the only point which specifically singles out Burnage, the racism and counterproductive antiracism at the school was exacerbated by a senior management so dysfunctional that it negatively affected virtually every aspect of the school's ability to function as a cohesive and responsible institution. From this summation it is almost inevitable that the Report's most practical and most easily acted upon recommendation was the removal from the school of the senior management team. Many of the Report's other recommendations were, just as inevitably, not so easily acted upon and far more revolutionary.

The Report introduces its summary of recommendations aimed at reducing racism with the statement that “we have been unable to find any theoretical ready-made model for success” and suggests that LEAs and schools have to proceed “by an element of trial and error and by listening and talking” (403). As a way of nudging this process along, the Report gives a detailed account of a students’ theatre project which it considers exemplary of good educational practice rooted in antiracist concerns. Run as an educational experiment and partly funded by the MEC, the Frontline Theatre group involved about 75 students from three schools– including Burnage– for a five month period during which the students researched, wrote and performed a musical based on the lives of Len Johnson and Annie Forshaw, an African-Irish couple who campaigned on behalf of equal rights for blacks and women in the 1930s and helped organize the Pan-African Congress. The students involved spoke to the Inquiry panel and reported that the experience had increased their self-confidence and their critical thinking, deepened their historical perspectives and had provided them a forum for researching and debating a wide range of issues, such as imperialism, racism and sexism (361-362). The Report lauds the project as exemplifying an interdisciplinary approach which encourages student participation and empowerment in their own education, and which draws on and validates students’ experience.

While the theatre project suggests a model for antiracist pedagogy, the Report’s suggestions for antiracism policies for schools are derived from several Head teachers’ accounts of what has worked– and what has not– at their schools, and from submissions made to the Inquiry by a group of educational psychologists and a group of Manchester Education inspectors. A few key points emerge from the Report’s commentary on the Head teachers’ words and the submissions. First, it is of crucial importance that all schools have clear statements and policies on their positions on

racism and violence (350). Second, the process by which such policies are generated is as important as the product. It is a process which should involve the participation and input of every sector within the school community– students, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and governors. As one Head who followed this process put it, the school policy “if only I’d written it, would have been brilliant” but it became more important to get a policy which all parties “were prepared to agree to” and which therefore was more likely to be implemented and adhered to (351). Third, schools have to find ways of opening themselves up to parents and encouraging them to become involved and to participate in substantial aspects of the school, not just fund-raising. The Report provides several accounts of successes and failures of schools trying to encourage such participation (352-356), as well as parents’ accounts of being actively discouraged when they tried to get involved (356-358). Fourth, students need to be empowered to participate in, and be responsible, for the generation of policy and other decision making processes in the school (359).

In shaping these points into concrete recommendations, the Report, expanding on and critiquing the psychology and inspectorate submissions, proposes several changes to the traditional power structure in schools and LEAs. First it calls for the creation of “umbrella working groups” involving representatives from every area and sector of the school community which would operate democratically and oversee the generation and implementation of social policies (ie: violence, racism, sexism, class, etc.) at individual schools, and be empowered to conduct negotiations with the LEA on such matters, thus replacing the EMAG system. The Report maintains that such matters and policies “should not be seen as solely the responsibility of the school management or the Education Authority” (368). Second, the Report calls for democratically elected student unions, resourced and accommodated by each school, which would have representation in the “umbrella group” and thus

would take part in shaping and reviewing school policy as well as being part of the school mechanism by which policies are implemented and monitored (371). Third, the Report recommends either an advocacy system or the creation of a subsection of the “umbrella group” to act as a tribunal to protect students’ interests when disputes with teachers or school managers arise (372). The Report acknowledges that these recommendations would require something of a revolution in the traditional power structures within schools, but it maintains— approvingly quoting the submission from the educational psychologists— that ““a shift of power within the school system is an inevitable and attainable objective” (368).

Themes

These fairly radical recommendations reflect two interrelated themes which inform virtually every aspect of the Inquiry and its Report. The first is that local institutions and authorities, be they schools, LEAs, municipal councils, the police, and even many local community groups consistently ignore or even actively work to silence the views and the experiences of individuals within the communities they are supposed to serve or represent. The second is that real and sustainable improvement and progress can only be brought about, not by top-down decisions and directives made and issued by those in power, but by consensus arrived at through equal and fair discussion and participation from among the widest possible range of individuals and representative viewpoints.

The narrative and anecdotal detail, often presented in direct quotation, which make up the bulk of the Report, is one way in which the authors tacitly foreground individual and personal experiences. Episodes such as the “additional and unnecessary anguish” (20) caused to the Ullah family by the school’s foisting a completely unnecessary Bengali speaking interpreter on them at the

hospital, an event which led to a complete stranger interposing himself between the family and hospital staff and the police, even to the extent that the interpreter was allowed to view Ahmed's body while his mother and adult sister were not, are presented in some detail not simply to illustrate the racializing assumptions made by a supposedly antiracist school management, but to present the experience of a family whose tragedy is compounded by having to cope with the consequences of being identified with a racialized category rather than as an individual family in grief.

The importance of presenting such episodes in relation to dealing with racism, has to do with the fact that, as we have seen, the Report maintains that racism can only be adequately dealt with if it is properly understood not as an issue of individual morality and behaviour, but within the context of complex social relations shaped by historically structured social and political inequalities around 'race', gender, class and other social categories. Any antiracist policy or practice which ignores the lived social relations which affect, and are affected by racism is bound to be ineffectual and counterproductive. While the Report's emphasis on people's experience through a wealth of anecdote and narrative detail is presumably what led one MEC official to dismiss it as "more like a novel than a piece of clinical research" (quoted in *Independent* 29 April 90), this dismissive comment misses the point that the authors of the Report make, in one way or another, again and again: that complex social relations do not lend themselves to clinical observation and analysis, and certainly not to generalizing and reductive theories and "one size fits all" solutions. The only way to begin to grasp complex social relations is to listen to the experiences and views of those who participate in them. It is this, not solutions fitted to bureaucratic needs or derived from abstract social theory, which must provide the basis for any workable accommodation. It is a point made explicit in the Report's criticism of, specifically, the MEC's approach to antiracism which "takes

little account of the everyday experiences of Asian, Black and White Mancunians” (303), and more generally of policies generated through the bureaucratized, symbolic and morally based forms of antiracism which

inevitably...bear little or no relation to black students’ experiences or the strategies they have evolved for dealing with their experiences, and little or no relation to white students’ experiences or in many cases their strong commitment to anti-racism. Neither the policies nor the “consultation” process are capable on a practical or theoretical level of embracing the experience or subculture of the student population. (347)

It is the inclusion of such experience in the Report that Ian Macdonald, in his “Forward” to the belatedly published Report, cites as the reason why he and his co-panelists on the Inquiry decided, when all other avenues failed, to publish the Report at their own expense:

We publish, not because we are claiming to have discovered a new recipe, but because we believe that by putting into our report the feelings and experiences of hundreds of people from Manchester schools, we can all take the struggle against racial violence and racial harassment forward to a new stage and can use positively the lessons of Burnage. (xii)

Clearly, the Inquiry panel viewed the input of personal experience as central to their Report, and as leading to a “new stage” in antiracism, one which presumably would be based on the individual experiences to which the Report gives so much attention.

The second theme which runs through the Report, and which is intertwined with that of experience, is the necessity of opening up discussion and participation within community institutions and authorities as a way to build consensus and understanding. As we have seen, the Report is highly critical of the Burnage management’s attempts to control or stifle lines of communication in the school and of the pall of silence which fell over the school after the murder, allowing tensions and conflicts to fester. Equally, the police misuse of *sub judice* to put an end to the debate at Bangladeshi House about the official police statement on the nature of the murder reinforced the silencing of discussion at Burnage and elsewhere in the community which again led to an increase in tensions. Similarly, the limits placed on open discussion and participation have had the effect of promoting

and reinforcing conflicts and diverging perceptions among different groups within the community, allowing, for example, working class white people to view antiracism as a form of preferential treatment from which they themselves are barred.

As the Report makes clear in its recommendations for, and its criticism of, policy generating processes, it is only through taking into account the complexity of social relations by way of listening to and acknowledging individual experiences, and by democratizing the process so that it is inclusive and participatory, that policies will not only address the issue at hand, but will also win consensus and be more likely to be implemented and practiced. The need to struggle against the silences and obstacles which isolate institutions and authorities from people's experience and precludes discussion, participation and consensus represents the main thrust and theme of the Burnage Report. Ironically, it is a theme which is played out not only textually, in the events the inquiry was called on to examine, but also extra-textually, in the city council's suppression of the report and in the subsequent representations of the Report in the national press. In the words of Inquiry Chair Ian Macdonald,

Involvement in discussion, starting with people from where they are and moving forward with them, informed the whole of our inquiry. The non-publication of our report has resulted in the opposite happening, where nothing is discussed. (ix)

Readings: The Press and Public Representations of the Burnage Report

While the members of the Macdonald Inquiry hoped they had produced “a document people could use”, aimed primarily at the Burnage school community and, secondarily, at other school communities in Manchester (Macdonald *et al*, xii), their report turned out to be neither as accessible as they had hoped, nor as having the localized relevance they had intended. After it received the Report in January 1988, the Manchester City Council scheduled March 30 as the publication launch, but then scrapped the launch on March 28. Following repeated postponements, the Council eventually announced that it would not publish the full Report at all, citing legal advice which indicated the potentially libelous content of some sections of the Report (Bullas 1989). In the meantime however, a series of minor leaks to the local *Manchester Evening News* culminated in that paper’s acquisition of the entire concluding chapter of the Report, which it published in an eight page pull-out section of its April 25 edition. Whatever local discussion and debate this may have produced was quickly overtaken by the attention given this leak in the national press, with the result that the Report’s meaning, significance, and often its content, were largely mediated through, and

constructed in, the pages of the mass circulation national daily newspapers.

The problematic nature of this media attention is indicated by the fact that the two versions of the Report which were finally published in 1989 both included essays which critiqued this coverage. The summary version, published by the Runnymede Trust, an educational research foundation, included Paul Gordon's analysis of "Burnage and the Press" as an appendix. *Murder in the Playground* had, among its introductory materials, a section devoted to "The Media Coverage", which included the text of the press release the Inquiry panel issued in May 1988 to denounce the ways in which the Report had been represented in the press.

In the following examination of the representations of the Burnage Report in the press I hope to show, first, that many of these representations of the Report's meaning and content cannot be supported by even a cursory reading of either the Report as a whole, or the leak to *Manchester Evening News* which set off the flurry of media attention and was, presumably, the media's primary source for information about the Report. Secondly, I intend to demonstrate that the source of these representations derived, not simply from a careless reading or a flawed understanding of the Burnage Report, but from the pre-existing framework of notions and "common sense" understandings which constituted the prevailing—though contested—public discourse concerning the nature of antiracism and its role in education, a discourse which as outlined in Chapter 3, much of the national press not only subscribed to, but had actively promoted and sustained. It will be argued that the interest much of the press showed in the Report, as opposed to the relative lack of interest in the murder or the levels of violence and racism in Manchester schools which gave rise

to the Inquiry¹, depended on the ability of the press to fix the meaning of the Report within this discourse. Thirdly, I hope to show that press attempts to fix the meaning and significance of the Burnage Report has had wide repercussions for the way in which the Report was– and continues to be– understood even within the antiracist movement itself.

As outlined in Chapter 2, my analysis of the press representations of the Burnage Report will focus primarily on the *Times* which, while not the most widely read of the national dailies, has influence and impact which transcends its circulation numbers. As a “top tier” newspaper and the flagship of Rupert Murdoch’s NewsCorp, it possesses the outreach, resources and prestige which allow it to set the news agenda (Herman and Chomsky 1988: 4-5). In addition to the analysis of items from the *Times* I will also look at selected articles published in the *Guardian* during the crucial first days of coverage of the Report– a time when public representations of the Report were being ‘fixed’– as a way of checking for the continuities of the representations and discursive claims across other print media locations. Secondary sources, particularly the accounts of the press coverage of the Report provided by Gordon (1989) and *Murder in the Playground* (Macdonald et al 1989), will be referenced to similar ends, that is to establish that the nature of coverage in the *Times* was not unique to that paper. Finally, the analysis provided here proceeds largely according to the chronology in which items were published, in order to illustrate the cumulative impact of the representations, and to indicate subtle changes in these representations as parts of the Report

¹The *Times Educational Supplement* did carry a front page article about violence at Burnage on 22 August 1986, three weeks before Ahmed Ullah’s murder, in which a Manchester Schools inspector’s report is said to have found that corridor behaviour at Burnage’s Lower School was “among the worst” the inspector had ever seen, and that “[a]ggressive, violent behaviour seemed to be the norm.” According to the article Head teacher Dr Gough denied that discipline was a problem at the school and that the inspector might have mistaken “horseplay” for aggression– a response in keeping with the portrait drawn of Dr Gough in the Burnage Report. Interestingly, the inspector, identified in the article as Adge Warm, was one of the group of inspectors whose submission to the Inquiry inspired the Burnage Report’s recommendations for the creation of “working umbrella groups”.

became more widely accessible.

Prior to the *Manchester Evening News*' publication of the leaked chapter, the national press had shown little interest in the Burnage case. In the *Times* the murder of Ahmed Ullah had warranted exactly one sentence in a "News Roundup" sidebar in the page 3 "Home News" section of the paper on the day after the murder, and Darren Coulburn's trial had been the subject of three short reports in the same page 3 section of the paper in the first week of February 1987. Burnage would not be mentioned again in the *Times* until April 26 1988.

A month before the *Manchester Evening News* ran the Report's concluding chapter, it covered smaller and more sketchy leaks of the Report which revealed the Inquiry's finding of a "racial element" in the murder, and its recommendation that head teacher Dr. Gough and his two deputies be removed from the school (*M.E.N.* 28, 29, 31 March 88). These stories were picked up only by the *Guardian* (29 March 88), the *Independent* (30 March 88), and the *Times Educational Supplement* (1 Apr 88; 1)². After the *Manchester Evening News*' publication of the Report's concluding chapter however, Burnage became suddenly a matter of intense interest for the national press. The *Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Times*, as well as the *Independent* and the *Guardian* printed articles and editorials on the Burnage Report (Gordon 1989; Macdonald *et al* 1989: xix-xxi). Nor was coverage of the Burnage Report a short-lived affair: The *Times* for example, in contrast to the total of four articles concerning Burnage it carried over the 19 months from the time of the murder until the *Manchester Evening News* leak, ran 24 items on Burnage

² See Paul Gordon (1989). Gordon is my only source for the *Guardian* and *Independent* articles, but I have seen the *TES* piece, which Gordon mistakenly dates as 31 March. The *TES* piece focuses on the Report's critique of management at Burnage and its call for Dr Gough's removal, and on the Secondary Heads Association's claim that any recommendation on Dr Gough's future is outside the Inquiry's terms of reference.

between the end of April and the end of June. The frequency of articles on Burnage in the *Times* breaks down as follows: three articles and one editorial in the last five days of April; nine articles and one editorial in May and ten articles in June. Thereafter coverage tailed off, with only two articles in each of July, August and September. The publication of the full Report in December 1989 briefly resurrected interest, with two articles in December and four in the first week of January 1990.³ Meanwhile the associated *Times Educational Supplement*, a weekly publication, carried a further 10 items over the same 10 week (late April to end of June) period.

The articles and editorials which appeared in the wake of the April 25 leak generally saw the Report's critique of a particular approach to antiracism as a condemnation of antiracism in general. Moreover, the press represented the Report's finding that at Burnage this approach to antiracism had failed to defuse, and had even contributed to, increased tension and polarization at the school *after* the murder, as a finding in which antiracism was established as a causal factor in the murder itself. Thus on April 26 the *Daily Telegraph* ran an article on the leak of the Report under the headline, "Anti-racist policy 'led to killing'", and a *Daily Mail* editorial claimed that the Burnage Report demonstrated that antiracism was a "dangerous obsession" (Gordon 1989: 43). The *Sun* editorial of April 28 claimed the Report showed that antiracism at Burnage had "led to so much hatred that it cost 13 year old Ahmed Iqbal Ullah his life" (quoted in Gordon 1989: 43). Even the *Guardian*, in an article on Burnage teachers' responses to the leak began with the statement that "anti-racist practices [at Burnage] apparently backfired and led to the death of an Asian pupil" (27

³The second article in December is only tangentially related, but significant nevertheless, as it concerns Ian Macdonald's involvement in a dispute at a school which Macdonald's children had attended, between the Inner London Education Authority and several teachers at the school who were resisting the ILEA's attempt to transfer them. See below for further discussion.

Apr 1988).

That such constructions of the Burnage Report's main findings were not inevitable is indicated by the articles in the *Manchester Evening News* which accompanied its reprint of the Report's concluding chapter (*MEN* 25 Apr 88). An article introducing the chapter focuses, not on the Report's critique of antiracism, but on its findings about the murder, noting that the Macdonald Inquiry had its origins in the controversy stirred up by the police statement which denied racism as a factor in Ahmed Ullah's death. It then summarizes the Inquiry's view that the murder was racist, "though not necessarily the result of a conscious attitude" on the part of Darren Coulburn, but rather as "one of the vital ingredients" in the events and circumstances that led to their "fatal combat". The article adds that apart from addressing the murder, the Inquiry's terms of reference also covered the wider issues "of violence and racism in Manchester schools and what might be done to combat them."

The paper's leading comment on the same day, "Burnage report: Why we publish", highlights two aspects of the Report: its call for the making available to "schools in deprived white working class areas...the kind of special help available to those with large numbers of black and Asian pupils"; and its claim that "the particular approach to anti-racism adopted at Burnage is fatally flawed and has achieved the opposite of what was intended". These two points, the editorial says, "deserve special attention – not only in Manchester but nationally".

The Report certainly did get attention from the national press, but two of the three areas the *Manchester Evening News* called attention to– the racist element in the murder and the issue of aid for schools serving economically deprived working class populations– were largely ignored. But the last point, perhaps because of the suggestiveness of the phrase "fatally flawed", was taken up

and expanded upon, losing in the process the editorial's insistence that criticism was directed at a "particular" approach to antiracism, not antiracism in general. Whether or not the phrase inspired the representations of the Report constructed in the national press, it certainly fit well with the discourse on antiracism which the press had sustained for several years.

This discourse has been well documented (see especially Murray 1986; Seidel 1987a & 1987b; Searle 1987; Gordon 1990) and has been outlined above in Chapter 3. In short, the discourse dates back to at least the 1960s, coinciding with the first anti-discrimination laws. By way of discursive strategies such as reversal and attribution (van Dijk 1991: 193), the discourse was employed to castigate virtually all public interventions against racism as being the source of the inequities, divisiveness and deprivations such interventions were intended to address. Whatever arguments might be used on behalf of subordinate social groups, showing the need for intervention, were inverted to claim that such interventions threatened the stability and value of British or English people, their traditions and institutions. By the mid 1980s elements of the discourse had become almost ubiquitous in the press, as educational policies derived from multiculturalism and antiracism began to be implemented in educational institutions. It was within this discursive context that the Burnage Report was received in the press. Antiracism was already "known" to be the work of extreme leftists; it was intolerant, promoted racism for its own ends, squelched free thought and speech and threatened the nation. And now, with the Burnage Report, it could be blamed for murder.

Interestingly, *The Times* was one of the few papers which didn't initially make the link between antiracism and Ahmed Ullah's death. On April 26 it carried only a single paragraph item in a "News Roundup" sidebar in the "Home News" section of the paper, under the headline

“Racism led to killing” (*Times* 26 April 88). It states briefly that according to an independent inquiry, “[w]idespread racism in Manchester schools led to the killing by a white pupil of an Asian boy aged 13.” It adds that Darren Coulburn had already been convicted of murder. It does not mention the leaked chapter or the delays in getting the Report published. It is also not quite an accurate reflection of the Burnage Report’s claims, though closer to the tenor of the Report than the longer news item— four half columns— which appeared the following day with the sub-head “Left-wing ideas ‘engendered tension’” carried above the main headline, “Baker may review schools’ policy on race after killing” (*Times* 27 Apr 88: 3a).

The more one reads this article the more curious it becomes. Both the headline and sub-head are oddly misleading, which is significant in that research shows headlines to be the most commonly remembered component of news articles and are used by readers in understanding and constructing the significance of the item which follows (van Dijk 1991: 50-52). Considering that the article is ostensibly a news item on the leak of the Burnage Report, it is odd that the headlines make no reference to the Report, choosing instead to highlight a “killing” which took place nearly two years before. It also highlights “left-wing ideas”, links these to “tensions” and links both to a strangely speculative claim about the possibility of Education Minister Kenneth Baker conducting a “review” of “schools’ policy on race”, a review which, if it is in fact undertaken, will have been related to a “killing”. The telegraphic headlines would seem to be saying that antiracism policies in schools consist of, or are influenced by, leftist ideas which have created tension which led to someone being killed and that this “may” now inspire the government minister for education and science to launch an investigation into these policies. This reading of the headlines seems, at first glance, to be supported by the article’s opening sentence.

Policies adopted by schools throughout the country to prevent racial tension may be urgently reviewed after an official inquiry into the death of an Asian pupil who was stabbed to death in a Manchester secondary school playground.

At a second glance, it will be noticed that the oddly speculative nature of the claim about an impending review of school antiracism policies is maintained (and made even more odd by lending urgency to the possibility), but Baker has disappeared, as have the left-wing ideas, and the “killing” has been transformed into an inquiry into the killing. While Baker resurfaces briefly in the second paragraph, he does so only as someone who “will study the inquiry report”. The possible review of school policies is never mentioned again, and nothing in the article indicates where the suggestion originated. Left-wing ideas likewise are never mentioned in the text of the article, although in the fourth paragraph the Manchester City Council is identified as being “Labour controlled”.

The headlines and the opening sentence would seem to be less concerned with either reflecting the article’s content or reporting the news (how can an unsubstantiated and uncredited claim about something which might happen be newsworthy?), than they are in establishing a context by which to read and understand the remainder of the text— a context, moreover, which seems to be flown in from some extra-textual source. It is a context which works to define the subject of the article as antiracism policies in schools which are problematic because they create tension which has led to a murder. Since this revelation has come “after an official inquiry” it is natural to assume that it reflects, or can at least be extrapolated from, the inquiry’s conclusions. While not as direct or as explicit as the *Telegraph* headline or the *Sun* editorial, the message here is essentially the same— that the Burnage Report blames antiracism for the murder of Ahmed Ullah.

The text which follows does nothing to dispel this notion. The inquiry report is said to describe “a paradox existing at Burnage High School” where in spite of governors and teachers

being “committed to anti-racist policies, the school declined into racial conflict and polarization.” The next paragraph states that, according to the Report, responsibility for this decline “lay with the senior school managers who over zealously interpreted racial harmony guidelines set down by Labour-controlled Manchester City Council.” One might quibble about the accuracy of characterizing Burnage teachers as committed to antiracism when the summary chapter published in the *Manchester Evening News* refers to incidents of “blatantly racist” behaviour on the part of some teachers (Macdonald et al 1989: 383), or question the notion that the school “declined” into racial conflict as if no such conflict existed prior to the commitment to antiracism. Overall however, the claims made here about the Report are, if taken in isolation, arguably supportable. On the other hand, viewed within the context established by the headlines and the opening sentence, they take on an ominous quality, feeding into conclusions which are clearly unsupported by the Report itself.

The next four paragraphs of the article present straightforward background information: the Report has not been published because of concern that the contents may be libellous; a non-contentious version will be produced within a month; staff at Burnage urge that the Report be published, and are expected to demand that its recommendations, including the removal of senior management, be acted on as soon as possible. Immediately following this, the article states that “[l]ooming problems” were first brought to the attention of the school governors by “concerned teachers” in 1985, leading to a governors’ investigation which recommended changes to “divisive policies”. These recommendations were not acted on.

The article seems here to have returned to the content of the Burnage Report– the governors’ investigation and recommendations are recounted there– and readers might naturally assume that

the “looming problems”, “divisive policies” and teachers’ concerns all refer back to the antiracism policies mentioned earlier and which are the focus of the headline. Yet the Burnage Report makes clear (the governors’ report is included among its appendices) that the governors investigation and recommendations were primarily concerned with poor staff-management relations in which antiracism was but one of several policy initiatives, including the abolition of corporal punishment and an emphasis on child-centred pedagogy, which was seen to have contributed to divisions between management and staff. None of the governors’ recommendations addressed the antiracism policies themselves– the major problem was seen to be poor communication between management and staff (Macdonald *et al*: 184-9; 386).

The article goes on to allow the misleading implication to colour a series of quotes from Burnage governor Audrey Jones, who “said yesterday” that if only the governors had acted on the 1985 recommendations, “this child may not have died.” Jones continues to say that “teachers were desperately worried about the way the headmaster and his deputies were running the school and believed both discipline and pupil relationships were being endangered”. Jones may in fact have been speaking of the poor lines of communication and inconsistent application of sanctions at Burnage which, among many other areas of mismanagement, the Report saw as having obstructed the school’s ability to take decisive action about Darren Coulburn prior to the murder. But within the context established by the article, Jones’ words appear to refer to problematic antiracism policies which, if only they had been addressed in 1985, Ahmed Ullah might be alive today. The apparently straightforward reference Jones makes to issues of mismanagement are turned to reflect the threat of antiracism.

It should be noted that thus far the article makes meaning primarily through inference and

implication (van Dijk 1991: 181-183) derived from the pre-established context provided by the headlines and initial sentence. However, the article now turns to a quotation from an unnamed Burnage teacher which makes explicit what thus far has been implicit: “No racial tension existed at the school...but we were deeply worried that racial tension was being engendered by the very masters who were pledged to eradicate it...if it ever existed in the first place” (Elisions are in the text). It is only after this quote, which seals the implications of the first half of the article, and which is the only piece of information which directly and explicitly contradicts the Burnage Report’s findings, that the article returns to the Report itself, summarizing the events subsequent to the murder, quoting the Report’s criticism of EMAGs, Burnage’s Community Education Department and the management style, and ending with what would become the most oft-quoted passage from the Report: “In the field of education the basic assumption behind many current anti-racist policies is that since black students are the victims of moral (*sic*) and prejudiced behaviour, white students are all to be seen as ‘racist’ whether they are ferret-eyed Fascists or committed anti-racists.” The quote is nearly accurate— there are a few silent elisions— except for the apparent typographical error which transforms the Report’s “immoral and prejudiced behaviour” (Macdonald *et al*: 402) into “moral and prejudiced behaviour”. Although the Report is (mostly) accurately quoted, its meaning is subsumed by the contextual equation established by the article, in which antiracism leads to tension, racism and murder. Thus an examination of the extent to which schools participate in “the culture of racism in Britain” (Macdonald *et al*: 166), and which calls for antiracist policies and practices in schools that are more relevant and effective than many now in place, gets turned around to implicate antiracism itself in the creation of the racism and violence.

An editorial printed in the *Times* under the banner “STORY OF A STABBING”(Times 27

Apr 88: 13a) on the same day as the news article, complements and expands the article's representation of the Burnage Report as primarily a critique of antiracism and its role in fomenting "racial tension" to the extent of causing a murder. Like the news article, the editorial spends the first third of its length establishing a context, which in this case is, as the editorial states in its opening sentence, "the malign consequences arising from the fanaticism of those who march under the banner of 'anti-racism'". As evidence of these "malign consequences" the cases of Ray Honeyford, John Savery and Maureen McGoldrick are briefly reiterated, although they would have been familiar to regular readers of the *Times*. Honeyford is "the Bradford headmaster [who] was hounded from his school as a racist because he had dared to discuss the intolerance of the race relations lobby" and had pointed out "the disadvantages suffered by white pupils in schools where 80 or 90 per cent speak English only as a second language" and where, moreover, "the languages and culture of the Indian sub-continent are taught at the expense of English language and culture". Savery is "a Bristol teacher" who "fell foul of the anti-racist clique" for writing about "the pressure to teach minority languages and culture instead of English" and thereby lost his job. McGoldrick's is, by these standards, a less impressive case— the "headmistress of a Brent primary school...was suspended for 'racism',...reinstated after court proceedings but...eventually decided to leave the borough". According to the editorial these cases make it clear that "[d]ivisive race policies are now widespread in education" but, since the evidence comes from people "without active left wing credentials" it has not convinced "those many 'liberals' who prefer theories to reality". The importance of the Burnage Report, is that since it comes from Ian Macdonald, "whose liberal

credentials of active concern for ethnic minorities are considered impeccable”⁴, it will finally convince “those many ‘liberals’” who were not moved by the cases of Honeyford, Savery and McGoldrick.

Even before addressing anything the Burnage Report has to say, the editorial establishes antiracism as being “divisive” and “intolerant”, and as producing “malign consequences”, while its adherents are filled with “fanaticism”. The editorial’s rhetoric stands several premises on their heads in an almost classic example of van Dijk’s identification of the semantic strategy of reversing attribution (van Dijk 1991 193-195): “intolerance”, commonly a quality associated with or synonymous with racism, is here ascribed to the “race relations lobby”; “disadvantage”, generally associated with the victims of racism, is here ascribed to “white pupils” who have themselves become minorities in schools and are alienated by multicultural or antiracist curricula. The fact that the editorial uses the same arguments– that educational disadvantage and alienation are produced when the curriculum is divorced from students’ culture and experience– which were (and are) employed in the name of antiracism is unacknowledged, if not unintentional.

By aligning the Burnage Report with Honeyford and the rest, the editorial has prepared the ground so well that it hardly needs to address the Report at all. Yet it does, and in so doing straightforwardly contradicts many of the Report’s findings. The editorial states that “[t]he killing itself appears not to have been racial”; that Darren Coulburn was “known beforehand to have

⁴ Co-authors Khan, Bhavnani and John, who are identified as such and whose photos and backgrounds are presented, along with Macdonald’s, in the *Manchester Evening News*’ eight page section on the Report, were only rarely acknowledged in the national press. In the *Times* their names come up in only two of the 35 items printed in the paper between 26 April 1988 and January– all three are mentioned in one item, but only as “other members of the inquiry team” (*Times* 31 May 88: 16b). Another item identifies John as “one of the authors” of the Report when he is quoted as countering an Inquiry witness’ claim that the Report had libeled her (*Times* 3 Jan 90: 3b).

psychiatric problems”; that prior to the murder “there had been no racial incidents apart from the minor sort found in any mixed school”, but that the “seeds of strife had already been set by the headmaster’s policy”. In contrast to these claims, the Report explicitly states that “the murder was racist” (Macdonald et al 1989: 378; this and all following references were also available in the *Manchester Evening News*’ publication of the concluding chapter) and that racism was “one of the vital ingredients” in the conflict between Coulburn and Ullah (Macdonald et al 1989: 378). While the Report does characterize Darren Coulburn as “highly disturbed” (Macdonald et al 1989: 378), there is no mention of psychiatric problems, known or unknown, either before or after the murder. The Report’s account of the 1982 assault on a student of Bangladeshi origin by five white students, resulting in “serious facial injuries and a fractured cheekbone” (Macdonald et al 1989: 384) would seem to constitute something more than a “minor sort” of “racial incident”, and also demonstrates that the “seeds of strife” were present before Dr Gough’s arrival. The Report’s references to the “blatantly racist” behaviour of staff (Macdonald et al 1989: 383) and the “daily dose of racist name-calling” suffered by Asian students (Macdonald et al 1989: 383) also contradict the editorial’s claim. One might almost believe that the editorialist had not read the *Manchester Evening News* piece at all, except that the Report’s criticisms of EMAGs and the Community Education Department at Burnage are reproduced fairly accurately (Macdonald et al 1989: 385-386), as are the Report’s comments about how being barred from Ahmed Ullah’s funeral made many white students feel that they somehow shared in the blame for the murder (Macdonald et al 1989: 380).

The editorial concludes that behind “the headmaster’s misguided zeal lie the malignant theories and ‘guidelines’ that can be found in places all over Britain”, and it calls on the government to “launch an open review of the way race education is being carried out, into whose hands it has

fallen and what is to be done about it”, thus dovetailing neatly back to the news article and its unsubstantiated claim of an impending ministerial review of “race policies” in schools.

The news article and the editorial are very much companion pieces. Both work to represent the Burnage Report as being primarily a critique of antiracism, rather than an investigation into racism and racial violence, and both present the Report’s findings only after carefully preparing a context at odds with the context which informed the Inquiry and its findings. Thus the Report’s criticism of Burnage’s policies for failing to address pre-existing racism and violence is quoted in support of the notion that antiracism causes racism and violence. The representation of the Report which is thereby created depends on very limited and selective quotation and reference from the Report, and only occasionally resorts to claims which explicitly contradict the Report. The two pieces between them reference or cite only those areas of the Report which deal with the aftermath of the murder (Macdonald et al 1989: 380-381), Burnage’s antiracism policies (Macdonald et al 1989: 385-386), school management (Macdonald et al 1989: 386-88), and the history of antiracist education (Macdonald et al 1989: 401-403). Altogether these areas take up 31 of the 146 paragraphs of the summary chapter leaked to the *Manchester Evening News*. To put this in perspective, the Report’s evidence of racism in Manchester schools (not including Burnage) alone takes up 34 paragraphs (Macdonald et al 1989: 391-398). All of this section of the Report is ignored, as are the 20 paragraphs devoted to examples of and recommendations for “good practice” in antiracism education (Macdonald et al 1989: 403-407). Indeed, apart from the recommendation for the removal of Dr Gough and his deputies, only one of the *Times*’ items, published more than a month after the Report hit the pages of the press, mentions any of the Report’s recommendations at all (see *Times* 31 May 88).

The *Times* followed up its April 27 news item and editorial the next day with a three column item headlined “Pupils are rewriting anti-racist policy after school murder” (*Times* 28 Apr 88). Once again the headline implies the culpability of the policy in Ahmed Ullah’s death, and suggests that students have identified the problem and are taking the initiative to correct it. While such an understanding is implicit in the headline, it would have been rendered explicit for readers of the *Times*’ output of the previous day. Yet this piece appears at first to be a positive article about recent developments at Burnage, describing something very much like an *ad hoc* version of the “working umbrella groups” recommended by the Report. The fact that this group is said to have started up just after the conclusion of the Inquiry, suggests that it may have been inspired by the participants’ involvement in the Inquiry. But such an interpretation is not allowed by the piece, and in any case would require knowledge of the Report which was not made available either in this item or in previous press representations of the Report. The item instead presents the situation as one in which “[f]ourth and fifth formers, teachers, governors and parents from the school have been meeting independently every fortnight since last September to discuss changes to the controversial policy”. No further comment is required on the nature of this controversy. Nevertheless, one could see in this a positive development in terms of involving the whole school community in the drafting of a more relevant policy. However, any positive connotations are immediately deflated by the sentence which follows: “However, Mrs Fatima Ullah, mother of the murdered boy, said yesterday: ‘It is all very well having anti-racism policies, except the death of my son has proved how worthless they are.’” Thus a potentially positive development at Burnage is instantly undermined. Whatever the context of Mrs Ullah’s remarks, the article’s “however” connects those remarks with the work of the Burnage group to revise the school’s policy, so that she is made to appear as specifically

dismissing this work. Although Mrs Ullah is later said to be “[c]losely monitoring” the group’s work, and is quoted as saying that student involvement in rewriting policy “warms my heart”, this does little to dispel the impression of her having dismissed antiracism in general, and the group’s work in particular. The layout of the article reinforces this, with a photo of Mrs Ullah appearing in the centre of the article, just above a caption in bold, enlarged print: ““The death of my son has proved how worthless anti-racist policies are””. The symmetry of the layout directs one’s focus from the headline “Pupils are rewriting anti-racist policy after school murder”, down to the photo and the highlighted caption, instantly nullifying whatever positive impression the headline might make, through the words of no less a moral authority than the murdered boy’s mother. Moreover, Mrs Ullah’s photo, a medium close-up in three quarter profile, highlights her ‘traditional’ head shawl and clearly presents her south Asian origins. The ‘coded’ message which the photo, the caption and the article underline and reinforce is that antiracism is dismissed even by the racialized groups whose interests it supposedly exists to promote.

A further example of the way in which succeeding items build on expectations developed in the accumulated impact of previous items is provided by an article which seems to be based on an interview with Ian Macdonald: “David Tytler talks to the author of the Burnage report: How Scarman got it wrong” (*Times* 31 May 88). The article begins by stating that the Report raises two questions: “how successful are the anti-racist policies pursued in Britain’s schools, and are the seeds of tragedy at Burnage High to be found in schools throughout the country?” In the manner in which they are posed, and within the understandings already established in the *Times*, these are not really two questions but one: are the policies that led to tragedy at Burnage present in other schools? A partial answer is immediately provided by way of a quote from Macdonald: “It could have

happened at any school in Manchester.” The quote echoes the claim made in the Report (Macdonald *et al.*: 46), but where in the context of the Report the reference is to levels of racism in schools all over Manchester and the United Kingdom, the implication here is that it applies to the presence of antiracism policies all over Manchester which are potentially fatal.

As indicated by the headline, the article centres on Macdonald’s critique of the Scarman Report into the 1981 “Brixton Disorders”. In the Report Scarman is criticized for limiting the concept of racism to one of individual prejudice and behaviour, denying the possibility that institutions or societies may be shaped and structured through racism (Macdonald *et al.*: 346). In the article however, Scarman is held responsible for the notion that all whites are racist– this is not in direct quotation and it is unclear whether the reporter is paraphrasing Macdonald or making an independent claim– and Macdonald is then said to be “clear that this is wrong”, a statement which is followed by a direct quote: ““I don’t believe that white people are irremediably racist. And I reject the notion that Britain is a racist society.”” Macdonald is further quoted as saying the Inquiry found an ““enormous amount of racism”” in Manchester schools, but that ““this is quite a different proposition to saying that Britain is a racist society.”” Thus, the roles of the Scarman and Macdonald are here reversed, with Scarman said to be claiming that racism is a societal phenomenon while Macdonald is seen to reject this in favour of a view of racism limited to individual attitudes and behaviour which, while capable of causing an “enormous amount of racism” must not be explained in terms of institutional or societal structures. The article thus quotes Macdonald in direct contradiction to the Report– of which he is the only acknowledged author– which, as we have seen, repeatedly insists on “the racist structure” of British society (Macdonald *et al.*: 43) and “the culture of racism in Britain in which all children are brought up (Macdonald *et al.*: 166). Whether or not

Macdonald has been misquoted, or quoted out of context, is not the point here. What is the point is that the article uses Macdonald's words to make claims about the Report which cannot be supported by the Report itself. Macdonald becomes part of the extra-textual evidence— like school governor Audrey Jones, the unnamed Burnage teacher and Fatima Ullah— which the *Times* marshals around its claims of the meaning and significance of the Report.

In fact, very few of the items in the *Times* after 27 April address the contents of the Report itself. The significance and meaning of the Report, as established in the first days after the *Manchester Evening News* leak, is taken for granted. Thus a short item on the National Union of Teachers' demands that the Burnage Report be published simply states that the Report "is said to have found that the anti-racist policies applied in the school fuelled racial hatred and led to the murder" (*Times* 4 May 88). The overwhelming majority of articles in the *Times* between 14 May and 17 June 1988, straightforwardly identify the Report as representing the findings of an inquiry into antiracism policies: it is "an investigation of anti-racial (*sic*) policies at a Manchester school" (*Times* 19 May 88: 5a); or a "report into the way a school, where a young Asian boy was murdered, operated its anti-racist policy (31 May 88: 1h). In a few weeks of press representations, the *Report of the Macdonald Inquiry into racism and racial violence in Manchester Schools* had been transformed into, in the words of another front page item, the report of "an inquiry panel set up to investigate anti-racism policy at Burnage in the wake of a killing" (*Times* 4 June 88: 1c). It will be noted that in the last two examples, the Report as an investigation into antiracism policies is linked with the murder, implying that the murder was the catalyst for the investigation of antiracism, thus reinforcing the causal connections. Most of the other items published in the *Times* serve to reinforce the meaning and significance of the Report as established in the initial coverage, without actual

reference to, either in terms of discussion or quotation, the Report itself.

The last item to be examined here is the second leading editorial published in the *Times*. Appearing under the headline “PUBLISH THE BURNAGE REPORT” (*Times* 19 May 88: 13a), it characterizes the Report– along the lines of the familiar formula– as being “on circumstances surrounding the murder of a 13 year old Asian boy at Burnage High School, and on the way in which the school conducted its so-called anti-racism policy”. It goes on to accuse the Manchester council of withholding the Report in order to “avoid public discussion” of its own policies; renews calls for a review or even a parliamentary debate on antiracism policies; and makes its own recommendations for future policies by way of holding up the example of Levenshulme High School, Manchester– the site of a recent visit by Education Minister Kenneth Baker. Levenshulme is said to be a school which has dealt with “race relations” among students without “ramming theories of ‘anti-racism’ down their throats”. Instead of “teaching children about ‘racism’ which can put the idea into the heads of some of them”, at Levenshulme good conduct is “inculcated by example” and teachers teach “decent behaviour between individual children, regardless of race”. The editorial fails to mention that Levenshulme, a girls’ school near Burnage, is noted in the Report as “a second front”, the only other school in Manchester to which the violence and tensions at Burnage spread in March 1987 (Macdonald *et al*:119-122; 380). Nor does it mention that the “colour-blind” approach being advocated is precisely the approach which the Inquiry panel criticized in its press release of 5 May– covered by the *Times* in a two paragraph item under the misleading headline “Race policy condemned” (*Times* 7 May 88: 3h)– and reiterated in a press conference on 9 May, which the *Times* did not cover at all (see Macdonald *et al*: xxiv).

The rest of the editorial repeats– with considerably less rhetoric– much of what was

contained in the earlier editorial of 27 April. One exception to this is a backhanded retraction of the earlier editorial's claim the murder had not been "racial": "The report apparently indicates a racial aspect to the murder, even though it was committed by a mentally disturbed boy." Thus the inaccurate claim made earlier is corrected, but questioned by insisting on another inaccurate claim. One catches a glimpse here of what appears to be the editorialist's struggle with the Report. On the one hand the press representations had been facilitated by the non-publication of the Report, and demands that it be published provided a convenient way of castigating the Labour controlled Manchester council. On the other hand, further leaks and partial releases of individual chapters, not to mention the Inquiry's press release and press conference, were beginning to call into question some of those representations. One of the differences between this editorial and that of 27 April is the sense of the piece's negotiation with a text which increasingly cannot be made to support the editorialist's claims about it. Questioning the Report's finding that the murder was racist would seem to be, along with advocating the example of the Levenshulme, a preparation for a fallback position should the Report in fact be published.

Predictably, the *Times* coverage tailed off significantly after mid June when Manchester council released several chapters which detailed racist events at Burnage-- such as the 1982 assault-- prior to Dr Gough's appointment to the school, thus making it difficult to sustain the claim that Gough's policies had produced the racism where none had existed before. Just as predictably, when the *Times* took up Burnage again following the publication of the full Report in late 1989, four of the five articles highlight the Report's defamatory nature, with one of the articles run under the headline "School report 'is libellous'" (*Times* 1 Jan 90); another noting that Education Minister Baker had said that the Inquiry panel "should have given those accused in the report a chance to

reply”(Times 6 Dec 89); and a third noting that the “inquiry team” published “in spite of warnings from the city council and the Government that the report was libellous” (Times 4 Jan 90). The Report is now characterized as being “controversial” (Times 6 Dec 89), while a Conservative member of Manchester council and former Burnage governor is prominently quoted as saying the Report is “biased and left-wing” (Times 4 Jan 90). Clearly, the Report as a fully published document was a far less useful text than it had been when it existed only as a summary chapter available only to the readership of a local newspaper.

The dominance of the discourse propagated in the right of centre newspapers can be seen to be reflected even in the *Guardian*, the only one of the “quality broadsheet” national newspapers to espouse a left of centre and progressive viewpoint, and which was generally sympathetic to antiracism. Its initial items represented the Report in terms identical to that of the rest of the national press. As we have seen, its earliest item on the Report referred to “anti-racist practices” which “backfired and led to the death of an Asian pupil” (*Guardian* 27 Apr 88). A further article connects the murder to antiracism policies which “paradoxically” contributed to racism (*Guardian* 28 Apr 88), thus reflecting even the language of representations in the *Times*. Another article on the same day, while providing a far wider range of detail from the Report than any in the *Times*, nevertheless highlights the “Failed race policy” in its headline and in the first half of the article. While the Report’s conclusions about the racist nature of the murder are not mentioned, the article does characterize Darren Coulburn as “severely disturbed”, thereby undermining— as the *Times* editorials did— claims about the murder’s racist context (*Guardian* 28 Apr 88).

Unlike the *Times*, however, the *Guardian* also provided alternate views, most notably in the form of a half page article based on an interview with Gus John (*Guardian* 3 May 88: 25a) which

is far more clear and straightforward– and far less negotiated– than the *Times* interview with Ian Macdonald, and which emphasizes John’s complete rejection of the notion that the Report in any way links antiracism to Ahmed Ullah’s murder. Nevertheless, the article is framed in terms of the question: “What are the lessons of the Burnage report for anti-racist policies?”, which thus again reinforced the representation of the Report as primarily a critique of antiracism.

One of the few publications where alternative views of the Burnage Report could be found was the *New Statesman*, a left of centre weekly news magazine. Yet in spite of the more accurate representations and ‘preferred’ readings on offer in its pages, it too, in one way or another, represented the Report within the narrow confines of its critique of antiracism. An otherwise excellent article which captures much of the Report’s significance outside that created in the press, and which notes that its call for democratization, community involvement and participation in school policy making represent a “revolution in the way schools are run...that would benefit not just disadvantaged black pupils but white working-class children as well”, is inexplicably entitled “Uncomfortable lesson for the left” (Roberts 1988). It’s a title which frames what follows in terms of right-wing and press discourses in which antiracism is seen as a component of a subversive leftist political agenda– in spite of the article’s point that many local authority antiracism policies have cross-party support– and implying that the Burnage Report is primarily a corrective to antiracism, an implication made all the more possible in light of the prior press coverage.

In another piece which originally appeared in the *New Statesman*, “Left, Right and Burnage”, A. Sivanandan, the editor of the journal *Race and Class*, rejects the notion that antiracism killed Ahmed Ullah, but acknowledges that “on the showing of the Macdonald Report [antiracism was] an accessory before and after the fact– merely by virtue of failing its own purpose” (Sivanandan

1988: 69). Sivanandan continues with a critique of the moralist and individualist content of much of antiracism, reiterating much of his earlier criticism of Racism Awareness Training— a presumably a source for the Report’s very similar criticism of RAT (Macdonald *et al*: 346; Sivanandan 1985)— but does not mention the Burnage Report again.

The effect of the press representations was, at very least, to reduce the Report to a critique of antiracism, thereby distorting a wide-ranging document of 33 chapters to the content of 3 of those chapters. Ignored by most of the press, and certainly by the *Times*, and thus removed from the circulation of public representation, were the Report’s claims of the extent to which racism dominates social relations in schools and surrounding communities, and its arguments in favour of democratization of school and local council hierarchies and policy-making processes. Moreover, the Report’s emphasis on listening and responding to the silenced voices and experiences of the people who actually constitute school communities, voices and experiences for which the authors of the Report self-consciously hoped to provide a medium, was silenced. The social exclusions the Report hoped to address were themselves excluded from the public representations of the Report.

6

Lived Cultures and Social Relations: the Impact of Public Representations of the Burnage Report

This chapter is intended to suggest some of the consequences of public representations of the Burnage Report. It must be emphasized that this account is partial and selective rather than exhaustive. The consequences are presented here first in terms of the ways press representations affected understandings of the Report itself. This will be presented by way of examining the tertiary academic literature on antiracism which refers to the Burnage Report, and functions primarily as a gauge by which to assess the reproductive power of the press representations of the Report. Second, the consequences of the representations– and of the discourse they reflected– on the prospect of some form of antiracism in education will be looked at. This will be presented in terms of an analysis of some of the responses, in the press and in academic literature, to the 1999 Stephen Lawrence Inquiry which was widely seen to represent a return to favour for antiracism (Bonnett 2000).

An early indication of the impact of the public representations of the Report on the idea of

antiracism is contained in a news item which appeared in the *Times Educational Supplement* about eight months after the Burnage Report hit the headlines. According to the item, the overall impact of the press reception of the Report was considered to be so negative for the prospects of antiracism that the Commission for Racial Equality was seriously considering an internal recommendation that, in light of the “damaging” press accounts of the Report, schools should replace the term ‘anti-racism’ with something “less oppositional” capable of conveying “its obvious common sense, thus forcing opponents on the defensive” (*TES* 6 Jan 89: 3c). Somehow, countering discourse and rhetoric with semantics was considered more effective than a concerted public contestation of the press accounts themselves.

Given the wide public dissemination of the representations, it is perhaps not altogether surprising that it was this representation of the Report which was generally addressed, and thereby largely legitimated, in many sources sympathetic to the antiracist movement itself. Where the press constructed a Report which indicated the need to eliminate antiracism, those sympathetic to antiracism generally accepted such a construction and either ignored the Report, or concluded that it indicated, if not the elimination of antiracism *per se*, the need for wholesale, self-critical introspection of the objectives, theories, strategies, practices and even the nomenclature of antiracism.

Such a view of the Report, one which reduces its content to the single issue of its critique of antiracism, and thereby limits the range of possible responses to the need to address that critique, was one which was taken up in the scholarly literature on racism and antiracism. In other words, those writings emanating from academia which reference the Burnage Report do so, for the most part, on the terms dictated by the ways the press represented the Report’s content and significance.

While much of the literature criticizes the press representations— at times limiting the significance of the Report to its role as providing fodder for an anti-antiracist press— it does so without providing readings of the Report which seriously challenge those representations.

That the academic literature rarely challenges or contests these representations is somewhat hard to understand. All the examples from this literature which will be cited below were published after the full Report had been made available. *Murder in the Playground: The Report of the Macdonald Inquiry into Racism and Racial Violence in Manchester Schools* was finally published, at the expense of the Inquiry panel itself, in December 1989 (*Times* 6 Dec 89). One might think that the authors' sense of commitment to their Report reflected in undertaking this expense might have been repaid in the form of readers, but this has generally not been the case, at least not among the academic writers on antiracism. While the Report is long, over 500 pages including the appendices, this length is dwarfed by such massive tomes as the Swann Committee's *Education for All* which, in spite of its length has been the subject of an anthology of critical appraisal (Verma 1989). The absence of similar appraisals of the Burnage Report reflects, I suspect, a combination of the power of its public representations in the press and an ambivalence for a text which was the subject of so much negative publicity for the cause of antiracism.

Paul Gordon, for example, whose previous work included a critique of press accounts of the Report (Gordon 1989), nevertheless fails to provide a counter representation in an essay on media collusion in the Conservative Government's campaign against local authorities by way of their antiracism commitments (Gordon 1990). Citing the Burnage Report as having been manipulated by the New Right as confirming the evils of antiracism, Gordon goes on to explain that the Report was the result of an inquiry into the murder of Ahmed Ullah, which "concluded that the anti-racist

policy pursued by the school had led to polarisation along racial lines” (Gordon 1990: 183). While Gordon goes on to deny press linkages between antiracism and the murder, and to emphasize the particularity— as opposed to press’ generalization of the Report’s critique of antiracism, his own explanation of the Report does not stray from the reductive representations of the press which, even when they do not explicitly link antiracism with Ahmed Ullah’s death, allow readers to draw their own conclusions from an inquiry into a school murder with racist overtones which “concludes” that school antiracism policies led to racial polarization. Gordon fails to see that press representations were enabled by reducing the Report’s multiple findings, conclusions and recommendations to a one-dimensional critique of Burnage’s policies. Thus, while Gordon challenges the particular and explicit linkages made in the press, his own account tends to confirm and legitimate the general thrust of press representations.

In a similar fashion Avtar Brah (1996) highlights the media as having a “field day” with the Burnage Report, with the result that supporters of all kinds of oppressions and inequalities “became curiously silent”. The “Burnage incident”, she continues, was a “watershed case whose fallout can still be felt today...I do not believe that the anti-racist project has yet recovered from this setback” (Brah 1996: 232). Yet again her own account of the Report does not significantly challenge what the press made of it, apart from insisting on the particular form of antiracism criticized by the Report. Her own characterization of the Report, that it “claimed the ‘anti-racist’ policy of the school to be seriously flawed [and] produced the opposite effects to what had been intended” (*ibid.*) again echoes the reductive representations in the press. Moreover, the phrase “Burnage incident” does not clearly distinguish whether it was the Report, the press coverage, or some combination of the two which presented a “setback” for antiracism.

This failure to examine the Report's evidence, findings and conclusions beyond its critique of antiracism is typical of much of the academic response, which tends to view the Report with some ambivalence. On the one hand it is often viewed as having damaged the reputation of antiracism, but on the other hand—no doubt because of the 'impeccable' credentials of its authors—it is acknowledged as part of a process of self-reflection and self-criticism necessitated by a retreat and loss of morale for which, ironically, the Report itself is seen to be partly responsible.

Almost inevitably, the Report is referenced in the literature as constituting a "critique from the left" (Brah 1996: 231; see also Bonnett 2000: 166; Mac an Ghaill 1999: 9; Sewell 1997: 20; Gillborn 1995: 78-82;), which has signaled a "failure" in antiracism (Rattansi 1992: 11; Searle 1989: 43), and contributed to a "crisis" within the antiracist movement (Mac an Ghaill 1999: 105; Gillborn 1995: 11; Lloyd 1994: 229; Bonnett 1993: 47, 53-4;), and the demise of "liberal consensus" on the need to address racism in schools (Alibhai-Brown 2001: 179; Rattansi 1992: 13). It thus becomes necessary "in the wake of the Burnage Report...to identify new priorities that undermine old certainties"(Donald and Rattansi 1992: 6). For Bonnett and Carrington, the Report is "one of the most important and influential statements of anti-racist 'critical revisionism'" (1996: 277), and thus casts the Report not only in the part of a cause of the "crisis" but also in the part of the solution. Yet if it is part of the solution the literature is not clear on how it be so. Bonnett and Carrington do not address the contents of the Report beyond quoting its criticism of Manchester's failure to address class in its equal opportunities policy.

There is the tendency in the literature to cite the Report as necessitating or constituting a critical reexamination of antiracism, without addressing either the findings or the recommendations which, presumably, have created the need for— or are constitutive of— such an exercise. The Donald

and Rattansi volume, *'Race', Culture and Difference*, seemingly references the Report as providing the catalyst and the example for many of the essays anthologized in the book, which offer an internal critique of antiracism. As the introduction states, there is a need to place “under critical scrutiny...the presuppositions, habits of thought and strategies that, under the banner of Antiracism, dominated political interventions in local authorities” (Donald and Rattansi 1992: 6). Apart from the phraseology which echoes the *Times* editorial of 27 April 1988, the following sentence relates this need to the Burnage Report, citing Rattansi’s contribution to the volume as arguing that “in the wake of the Burnage Report, it is necessary to identify new priorities that undermine old certainties”.

Rattansi’s “Changing the Subject? Racism, culture and education” opens the collection and begins with connecting the Report, which has been “widely interpreted as signaling the failure of the antiracist project in education”, with the need “to take a hard and perhaps painful look at the terms under which we have operated so far” (Rattansi 1992: 11). The examination which Rattansi then undertakes does not address the Report, or even question the validity of the interpretation which sees the Report in terms of the “failure” of antiracism, but instead offers a critical look at historical and theoretical roots of the animosity between multiculturalist and antiracist approaches to dealing with racism in education. Within this framework, the “astonishing condemnation of the antiracist policies” contained in the Burnage Report, and the media responses which followed, figure only insofar as they mark the end of the “fragile liberal consensus” on addressing racism in schools which had been established by the 1985 Swann Report (Rattansi 1992: 13).

Rattansi cites the Report only twice more in his essay, once quoting examples of teachers’ racist behaviour at Burnage, and noting the Report’s attempt to address the social complexities and

ambivalences of racism in its interpretation of the murder and the relevance of gendered violence within the context of a boys' only institution (Rattansi 1992: 22, 26-28). While Rattansi offers a valuable overview of the debate between antiracism and multiculturalism, and argues for the need to combine the two strands, he does not address most of issues raised by the Report itself or by the media coverage of the Report which signaled the "failure" of antiracism. His attempt to reconcile multiculturalism with antiracism seems to spring from a basic acceptance of the validity of the coverage and its representations of the Report, and not from the Report's own emphasis on the need for democratizing school and institutional hierarchies, encouraging the involvement of the whole school community and basing policies on local contexts and experiences. A reconciliation of multiculturalism and antiracism on the level of theory seems somehow beside the point of the issues raised in the Report, and does not even address, in concrete terms, Rattansi's stated aim of making antiracism "effective in education" (Rattansi 1992:11).

In the Donald and Rattansi volume, Rattansi gives way to a reprint of Paul Gilroy's much cited "The End of Antiracism"⁵. Gilroy, part of the collective which produced the seminal Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies volume *The Empire Strikes Back* (1982), and author of the 1987 *There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack* (which offered a critique of "municipal" antiracism which reverberates throughout the Burnage Report's own discussion of the insubstantial gestures which make up "symbolic" antiracism; see Gilroy 1987, especially 136-151), does not mention the Report at all, but his reference to the "moralistic excesses" of antiracism, his citations of the 'anti-racist' works by Honeyford and Lewis— both of which highlight the Burnage affair— and Phil

⁵ The essay appeared in Ball and Solomos (1990), *Race and Local Politics*, another volume which seems to have been much influenced by the press coverage of the Burnage Report and its effect on the retreat of local authorities from activist interventions in the area social justice and equity policies.

Cohen's extra textual linking of Gilroy's piece with the concerns of the Report (Cohen's essay follows Gilroy's and begins with a glance back at the essays which precede his), are suggestive and, in spite of no direct references to the Report, Gilroy addresses its concerns far more than does Rattansi. His critique of an antiracism which embraces notions such as those reflected in Greater London Council slogan, "We are all either the victims or the perpetrators of racism", in which he rejects the racializing and polarizing ascriptions of the uniformity and homogeneity of individuals' experiences, (Gilroy 1992: 60) echoes the Report (Macdonald *et al*: 346-7), as does his call for the democratization of increasingly inert and bureaucratized forms of antiracism and his rejection of single strategy approaches to racism which do not address the complex and contextualized grounds on which racism is enacted.⁶

While Gilroy's affirmation of much of the Report's content lacks any direct reference to the Report, David Gillborn's frequent references to the Report in his *Racism and Antiracism in Real Schools* are so diffuse and scattered throughout his text that the extent to which he affirms and concretizes multiple elements of the Report is not immediately apparent. While he makes no claims for the centrality of the Report's findings and recommendations in influencing or inspiring his project, there is no other single text which so thoroughly and widely addresses the issues raised by the Report.

While identifying the Report with the "crises in antiracist thinking" (Gillborn 1995: 11),

⁶ Ironically, Gilroy's essay itself was subjected to the same kind of reception given the Burnage Report, being reduced to the suggestion of the title and his statement that press accounts of antiracism's "moralistic excesses" had made it possible that "the idea of antiracism has been so discredited that it is no longer useful" (Gilroy 1992: 50). His essay as a whole was, on the basis of this comment, criticized as "fundamentally misguided" and as negatively affecting the "morale" of the British antiracism movement, already damaged by political marginalization and vilification (Bonnett and Carrington 1996: 271).

with “the new left critique”, and citing its criticism of “moral” antiracism (78-82), Gillborn also extensively cites the Report in relation to his chapters on “Antiracism and the whole school”, “Antiracism and the classroom” and “Student perspectives” which are informed by direct reference to the Report’s findings and recommendations on the need for democracy, community involvement and participation in schools (109-114); on the importance of addressing and making use of students’ experiences and understandings of the intersectionality of inequalities (136-137); and the need to address and explore identity issues with all students, in recognition of the fact that schools have done little to affirm or provide the grounds for individual or group identities (169-174). While Gillborn provides the most sustained and extensive exploration of the Burnage Report, the fact that he does not acknowledge his work in those terms has done little to counter the general perception of the Burnage Report as simply, and only, a critique of antiracism.

Yvonne Roberts, in her *New Statesman* article (Roberts 1988), concluded that the Report stood “almost no chance of implementation” but, citing James Baldwin’s statement that ““not everything that is faced can be changed....but nothing can be changed until it is faced””, Roberts stated that “at least the debate [on the Report] can begin.” Apparently Roberts’ “least” expectation turned out to be rather optimistic. The press representations of the Report seem to have closed down the debate, either on the Report or the ways in which schools should or should not address racism. As Ian Macdonald noted in 1988, the non-publication of the Report led to a situation where “nothing is discussed” (Macdonald et al: ix). It was a situation which would not be very much altered by the publication of *Murder in the Playground*.

The representations of the Burnage Report in the tertiary literature confirm, for the most part, the success of the previous public representations found in the press in defining the Report’s

meaning and significance in terms which reduced the Report to its relatively brief critique of particular antiracist policies and then universalized this critique to apply to any antiracist project in education. Such terms fit in with the prevailing neo-conservative discourse which much of the press publicized and sustained, and the Report was made to fit as evidence confirming validity of that discourse. It also testifies to the dominance and reproductive power of this discourse that it was able to define the terms in which the Report was perceived even in circles where the discourse enjoyed no support or credibility.

While the Burnage Report was effaced and replaced by way of its representations in the press, the debates around racism and antiracism were, seemingly, simultaneously effaced. While the Education Reform Act and the National Curriculum had some role to play in this, it does not account for the silence that enveloped racism. For most of the 1990s, Barnor Hesse observes, “the question of racism had virtually been eliminated from the vernacular of British public culture” (Hesse 2000: 9).

In 1999 this situation was seen to be dramatically altered by the publication of Sir William Macpherson’s report on the findings and recommendations of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. In late February and early March of 1999 the publication of the Macpherson Report was front page news in Britain. The Inquiry had been commissioned by the Home Office nearly two years earlier, shortly after the Labour party ended nearly two decades of Conservative government, and focused on whether racism in the London Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) had played a role in the mishandling of the investigation into the racist murder of 18 year old Stephen Lawrence in South London in April 1993. The Macpherson Report concluded that institutional racism in the MPS had indeed figured in a botched investigation which had allowed the half dozen suspects in the case to

go free. Among the Report's recommendations for reforms in the MPS and the British legal system, there were also calls for more vigorous attempts to address racism within the realm of public education in Britain.

The Macpherson Report was often seen to herald a shift in attitudes to racism in Britain. From the late 1980s up to Macpherson, the question of racism had been rendered "unsayable" (Hesse 2000: 9). For at least a few weeks, the Macpherson Report put the issue of racism on the front pages once again. An article in the *Economist* announced that the Report had put "[r]ace back on the agenda in Britain" (30 Jan 99), while the *Guardian* hailed the Report as a "landmark in race relations" (*Guardian* 25 Feb 99). Antiracist theorists made similar claims, seeing the Macpherson Report as "a genuine watershed" (Bhavnani 2001: 1; see also Gilroy 2000: 49), and arguing that the relatively sympathetic media response to the both the Report and the Lawrence case itself as signaling a "return to favour" for the acknowledgment of racism and the need for antiracism (Bonnett 2000: 148).

On the other hand, Arun Kundnani argued that the media response to Macpherson was in fact more negative than positive, and that it should be seen in terms of a discursive continuity from the 1980s, rather than as a break from the 1990s (Kundnani 2000). A *Daily Telegraph* editorial ("A misguided and unfair report"; reprinted in *The Weekly Telegraph* 3 March 99) suggested that at least one editorial writer was also mindful of the continuities rather than the breaks. After summing up the Report— and paying specific attention to its recommendations for interventions in the education system— the editorial concluded that Macpherson's findings and recommendations "represent the wild dreams of the Left, kept down, just, in the 1980s".

Given all the justifiable attention devoted to the case, what accounts for the absence of such

attention to events and issues around racism during the previous decade? In attempting to arrive at an answer to this question, I'd like to turn to one last examination of a press representation, in this case an article published in the *Economist* a few weeks before the Macpherson Report was made public.

Before examining the article, it is worth remembering that the central focus of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry was not the murder itself, but the subsequent police investigation. Lawrence, an 18 year old high school student, was stabbed to death at a south London bus stop in April 1993. His attackers were a group of white youths whose motives seem to have been primarily motivated by racism, there being no evidence that they or Lawrence— who was black— were known to each other, or that there had been any exchange between them prior to the attack. Although the attackers were identified to police by several sources, all within hours or days of the murder, the police did not act on this information until two weeks after the murder and consequently failed to uncover sufficient evidence to convict any of the suspects, leading to the charge that police racism was responsible for a less than vigorous investigation. Over the next few years there was an internal police inquiry into the original investigation, a second investigation, and a private prosecution launched by the Lawrence family against three of the suspects, which collapsed when the judge refused to allow the evidence of the only known witness to the murder. In August 1997 the newly elected Labour government announced its intention to hold a full judicial inquiry into the matter. That inquiry began hearing evidence in March 1998 and early in 1999 it submitted its report to the Home Office, which was the occasion for the *Economist* article quoted below.

Race is back on the agenda in Britain. In the past fortnight there have been demonstrations in north London, after the death of a black man in police custody. A black motorist, stopped 34 times by the police, has announced that he is suing for racial harassment. The Police Superintendents' Association has protested that the Home Office is withholding the findings of a study showing the "comparative

levels of offending between ethnic populations in this country". And the police have announced that they are re-opening inquiries into the death of Michael Menson, a black musician who died in north London after being set on fire two years ago. The police had suggested that his death was a suicide; they are now treating it as a racist murder.

This new interest in racial issues is directly traceable to a single event– the inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence (*Economist* 30 Jan 99)

So begins the article, which was entitled "Stephen Lawrence's Legacy". Although much of the article is straightforwardly informative, the opening paragraph seems intent on framing and defining the significance of the Stephen Lawrence case in a number of questionable ways.

The article begins with a declarative statement which is followed by a list of recent events which are held up as being either illustrative of the statement or supporting evidence for the claim it contains. This is followed by another declarative statement, which is neither illustrated or supported, linking the original statement and the illustrative events to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. Logically, there is no inherent connection between the events listed and either of the declarative statements which enclose them, apart from the inferred relationship between the word "race" in the first statement, the phrase "racial issues" in the second, and the adjectives "black" and "ethnic" in the list of illustrative events. In order to make sense of the text, readers need to be ready to identify "race" and "racial issues" with people who are "black" and with populations which are "ethnic". In the absence of such an identification, the events listed are linked only by the common element of the police– "police custody", "stopped 34 times by police", "Police Superintendents' Association", "police have announced" and "police had suggested". But the police are not referred to in either of the declarative statements and so, presumably, "police" are merely coincidental to the issue.

The issue is defined by the article as being one of 'race', and a "new interest in racial issues" which has been brought about by the Lawrence Inquiry. The text seems to construct not only a

causal relationship between the Inquiry and this “new interest”, but also between the “new interest” and the list of events of “the past fortnight”: the second declarative statement seems to be referring to these events as the “new interest” which is “directly traceable” to the Inquiry. Somehow, an interest in racial issues is seen as being causal of events which are characterized as racial issues. Apparently, when it comes to ‘race’, thinking a thing makes it so. It is the same logic which enabled critics of antiracism policies in the 1980s to argue that such policies were themselves the cause of racism.

There is a second curious causality constructed in the text through its definition of the issue as being one of ‘race’. It should be noted that since the 1960s ‘race’ has been refuted as a valid scientific, biological and genetic category. Since the late 1970s it has increasingly been questioned as a viable social category (Bourne 1980; Miles 1982, 1989, 1993; Lawrence 1982). In academic circles the problematic status of the concept is increasingly indicated by enclosing it in inverted commas. Yet in the media, ‘race’ is still routinely used as a meaningful, significant and explanatory categorical concept, thereby allowing it to be constantly re-inscribed as definitive of individuals, groups and social relations. Even so, it is difficult to see how ‘race’ can be seen as the defining issue in either the Stephen Lawrence case or the list of recent events, unless ‘race’ is somehow understood to be the causal agent. By foregrounding ‘race’, attention is focused on those who are racialized, rather than on those who killed Stephen Lawrence or Michael Menson, or the police officers who harass black motorists. Somehow it is the ‘race’ of those who are killed or harassed that is responsible, rather than the racism of the killers or of the police officers who harass motorists.

The opening statement of the article implies that ‘race’ has been missing from the agenda

for some time, though not long enough apparently, that the reader should have any difficulty connecting ‘race’ with “black” or “ethnic”. Furthermore, the fact that there is a study comparing “levels of offending between ethnic populations”, and that police superintendents would like to see it published, would seem to indicate that ‘race’ has not been off everyone’s agenda, if indeed it was ever off anyone’s agenda. Mention of this study in the opening paragraph is curious, as it bears only a marginal resemblance to the other events mentioned– calling to mind the old children’s game of “one of these things is not like the others”. Yet its inclusion here allows for a further reference later in the article when this study is connected to the issue of police harassment of motorists who happen to be black. After having cited a survey indicating that, annually, nearly a quarter of all black men report being stopped and questioned by police, the article continues:

Not all the differences in stop-and-search numbers can be blamed on racism. The Home Office is currently under pressure from police for refusing to publish a confidential study of relative crime rates among blacks, whites and Asians. (*Economist* 30 Jan 99)

Nothing more is said about the study or its contents– and little could be said about it since it is “confidential” and unpublished. Once again there is no logical connection between the claim in the first sentence and the information contained in the second, even though the it is clearly intended to support the claim of the first. Yet most readers would have little difficulty filling in what the article leaves unsaid, inferring that the conclusion of the study must indicate a higher rate of crime for blacks than for whites and, possibly, for Asians. Only such an inference could make any sense of the conjunction of these two sentences. That the sentence is meaningful for both the writer and the reader points to the extent to which the culture has been saturated with the discourse around ‘race’ and crime. The effect is to deny racism, indeed the only time racism is mentioned it is called into question. In fact, this is the rhetorical strategy of the text as a whole, in which an inquiry which

looked into whether police racism played a role in the mishandling of an investigation of a racist murder seeks to define the issues arising from the inquiry as being about 'race'.

If 'race' is back on the agenda in Britain, it was not the Lawrence Inquiry which put it back, but the news media itself. It is worth pointing out that the press played a large role in bringing the Lawrence case to national attention to begin with. For more than 18 months after the murder it was little commented on. In the *Times Educational Supplement* article on racist violence among school age children and youths, Lawrence is referred to in the "Timetable of Terror", but is not mentioned in the main article at all (Klein 1995).

According to Kamal Ahmed, in an article for the *Guardian*, the Lawrence case only became a national issue by way of the *Daily Mail*, a generally Right-leaning tabloid often given to sensationalism and not known for its antiracist stance. Indeed, its first articles on the case took the position that antiracist groups had leaped onto the case for their own political purposes, thereby hampering the police investigation. Later stories focused, not on the racist aspect of the murder, but on overly liberal "right to silence" laws which had allowed the suspects in the case to refuse to answer questions during the coroners' inquest. In February 1997 the *Mail* published a front page which showed the suspects below the headline that read simply, "Murderers!", which was accompanied by an editorial which challenged the suspects to take the paper to court. It was this bit of crusading sensationalism which caught the eye to Jack Straw, who would become Home Secretary in the new Labour government a few months later and order an inquiry into the case (*Guardian* 25 Feb 99). When the Macpherson Report blamed institutional racism within the police for the failure of the investigation into Lawrence's murder, a *Mail* editorial almost predictably attacked this conclusion, charging that Macpherson and the rest of the Inquiry panel had engaged

in “precisely the kind of prejudiced blanket condemnation in which genuine racists like to indulge” (quoted in Kundnani 2000: 9).

If the Stephen Lawrence case did put something back on the agenda in Britain— though for how long and to what effect remains to be seen— it wasn’t ‘race’ but racism. The *Economist* unwittingly makes the point that the presence or absence of racism as a public issue is not necessarily related to the presence or absence of racism itself. The article cites police statistics which show that in 1996 there were over 13,000 “racial incidents” in Britain, and that between 1994 and 1997 “race was reported to be a significant factor” in nine murders, five attempted murders, 482 arson or bomb attacks, and 866 “serious assaults.” Also cited is a British Crime Survey report which indicated that real figures for “race crimes” might be as much as 30 times higher than those acknowledged by police (*Economist* 30 Jan 99). The possibility of an annual rate of nearly 400,000 “race crimes”, at a time when the existence of racism went largely unacknowledged, points to factors other than the pervasiveness or significance of social problems in defining or acknowledging them as public issues. It may also point to the failure of antiracism to influence public perceptions through coming to grips with the power of representations.

The example of the Burnage Report demonstrates the way in which discourses of racist exclusions and racist denial in the larger social sphere is both reflected and reproduced in the media to create an ongoing and self-sustaining cycle. While the role of the press is rightfully cited as a major factor in the retreat of antiracism in the late 1980s, its culpability is frequently explained in terms of a web of connections between Margaret Thatcher’s government, media magnates like Rupert Murdoch, New Right thinkers like Roger Scruton and newspaper men like Ronald Butts, as well as editorial overlaps between and among the *Sun*, the *Times*, and the *Salisbury Review* (see for

example Murray 1986; Seidel 1987a & 1987b). While there is much to be said for this argument, it overlooks the fact that the denial of racism and hostility towards antiracism continues within the press, in a Britain now ruled by Labour (see Kundnani 2000), as well as in other European and North American states where the particular historical conjunctions of Britain in the 1980s no longer– or never did– prevail. A recent flurry of articles in North American newspapers and news weeklies similarly re-inscribe ‘race’ while denying racism. Typical examples include *Newsweek*’s cover story “Special Report: Redefining Race in America” (18 Sept 00); *Time*’s feature on the phenomena of ‘racial profiling’ (a phrase currently in vogue which euphemistically denies racism while reinforcing racialized identities), “What’s Race Got To Do With It?” (30 July 01); and a six week long series which ran in the *New York Times* in June and July 2000 under the title “How Race is Lived in America”. The series concluded with a special issue of *The New York Times Magazine* (16 July 00) entitled “Talking About Race”, which featured a discussion between reporters and editors who had worked on the series in which one of the participants says: “to what degree do we really allow blacks to say what is truly on their minds, what race does to them, what race means to them, how race makes it impossible for them or how race drives them crazy one way or another.” These sort of examples from mainstream media outlets suggest the discursive continuities with regard to racism and antiracism across geographical locations and historical conjunctions in the West.

With the ability of the discourse to render racism as an “unsayable” non-issue in the social sphere, what was, in the 1980s, a publicly funded “race relations industry” was reduced, in the 1990s, to “a marginal current within public sector provision” (Bonnett 2000:148). Where this marginalization is arguably the most alarming is in the field of education. Virtually every major related study or inquiry report over the last two decades, from Scarman (1981) to Macpherson

(1999) has underlined the role of the education system in the amelioration of racism. Yet it has been in education where the retreat of antiracism has been most visible. The tightening up of Section 11 funding, by which many schools were able to budget for antiracist initiatives, has meant that such initiatives have been eliminated (Gillborn 1995: 187). The autonomy of Local Education Authorities (LEAs), which had been primarily responsible for the development and implementation of antiracist and multicultural policies in schools, was sharply curtailed by the Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988 under which curricular control was ceded to the central government. The subsequent imposition of a National Curriculum in England and Wales left little room for curricular inclusion of antiracism or multiculturalism (Dale 1989; Blair and Arnot 1993; Lawton 1994).

The press representations of the Burnage Report accomplished the two things: they subsumed the Report within the racist denial of the New Right discourse, and allowed the Report to be held up as evidence with which to validate and legitimize the discourse, which in turn provided legitimation for aims of the 1988 Education Reform Act, themselves shaped by the same discourse. That meanings made for the Report in the public representations of the press, negotiated by way of the discourse, in the virtual absence of contestation in terms of more preferred readings, established the grounds on which the Report was addressed and understood even in locations (such as the leftist press or academia) where the discourse had little credibility, points to the power of representation, and the “profound differences in terms of access to the public sphere” (Johnson 1987: 37). The near monopoly on public representation enjoyed by the media served to erase not only the Burnage Report, but also silenced racialized and subordinate concerns and experiences, allowing them to go largely unaddressed.

7

Conclusions

This examination of the cultural production of the Burnage Report demonstrates that the production of meaning in texts involves forces beyond the text itself. The ways in which texts have cultural meaning and significance lie primarily not with authors but with processes by which texts are made public, processes which include placing the text at the mercy of public representation. The case of the Burnage Report clearly demonstrates the “transformations” texts undergo as they move through the circuit of cultural production (Johnson 1987: 31).

A comparison of the press representations with the ‘preferred’ reading of the Burnage Report reveals the extent to which the press accounts of the Report, and the accounts of the Report in the academic literature, fail to address the full range of contents, findings, and recommendations contained in the Report, not to mention the perspectives and understandings which informed both the conduct of Inquiry and shaped the particular outlook of its Report. In providing this ‘thick’ description I am well aware that what I have offered is my own representation of the Report, and that I have made conscious choices about what needs to be

emphasized and what can be left out, choices which are dictated by my own engagement with making the Report meaningful in ways which contest the meanings generally constructed around it. In so doing I have been forced to address previous representations, and this has, to some extent shaped my own. Thus I have examined the Report's critique of antiracism at some length, disproportionate to the relatively little space devoted to this critique in the Report, and at the expense of other aspects. I hope, however that I have been able to indicate that the bulk of the Report was lost, literally replaced by the representations of the press.

It should be clear however, that the public representation of the Burnage Report as a critique of antiracism has little bearing on the main thrust of the Report as a whole. While mindful of Stuart Hall's assertion that representations are constantly slipping and cannot be fixed (Hall 1997), it seems clear from the representations provided in the academic literature, that the press accounts did manage to fix the meaning of the Report to the extent that such meanings went largely unchallenged even within circles which had good reason to mistrust much of the press. The effect of the representations was to largely remove from circulation a document which might have, at very least, as Yvonne Roberts (1988) suggested, opened new areas for debate.

The Report's documentation of racism and racist violence in Manchester schools provided persuasive evidence of the need for antiracist interventions in schools, at a time when such a need was denied, and its recommendations for improving the generation and implementation of school-based social equity interventions provided perhaps one of the few workable solutions to a process fraught, as the Report itself indicates, and as was widely argued in claims against antiracism, with the potential to antagonize and alienate various segments of

the school community. A wider hearing of the Report may have influenced the debates of 1988, and it may yet do so in the future, yet the representations constructed in the press— only sporadically contested— ensured that most of the Report’s findings and recommendations were ignored, and it was marshaled instead as support, ironically, for the claims of those opposed to schools imposing policy on social issues which were seen to be outside their jurisdiction.

Also lost was the Report’s call for the democratization of school power structures and bureaucracies to allow for participation from all sectors of the school community, in a non-hierarchical manner, in the development and implementation of social policies. It seems not entirely implausible to suggest that school based issues and problems are constantly constructed and reconstructed in ways that make them unsolvable. The history of universal, compulsory, public education is arguably a cyclical history of problems and crises leading to solutions which lead to further problems and crises. Yet somehow very few proposed solutions, and none of the solutions which reach implementation, address the issue— the problem— of schooling itself. The nature of schooling, its purpose, the way it is structured, and attempts to isolate it from social issues deemed to be extra-mural— all of this is only rarely seen to be implicated. The Burnage Report’s recommendations for dealing with power relations in schools was a recognition that, ultimately, the nature and attending structures of schooling ought themselves to be problematized as the central issue.

Perhaps the greatest loss of all is that the extensive use of narrative, anecdote, direct quotation and summary accounts of interviews and testimony, by which the authors of the Report hoped to give voice to experiences and understandings generally unheard or silenced, were again silenced by the representations. This silencing of the voices and experiences in the

Report, voices and experiences largely belonging to racialized members of British society, replicated the social exclusions they experience in their daily lives within that society. Their narratives were excluded from representations of the Report, just as they are excluded from participation, power and belonging. Moreover, the representations in the press not only passively re-enact such racialized exclusions by not acknowledging them, but actively do so through their claims around antiracism. In the press representations antiracism is deemed unnecessary and is itself the source of intolerance and student alienation. Yet implicit– and sometimes explicit– in these claims is that while the intolerance, alienation and racism suffered by racialized students is ignored or denied, extremely tenuous claims about the intolerance and alienation and reverse racism suffered by members of the white community is valorized and held up as the malign consequences of antiracism.

In many ways this examination of the cultural production of the Burnage Report has been intertwined throughout with the circulation of a discourse. Seidel identifies the origins of this discourse in Britain in the creation of New Right groups, think-tanks and forums such as the Centre for Policy Studies, the Monday Group and the Salisbury Group in the 1970s as means to exert pressure on the Conservative Party to embrace the neo-conservative/neo-liberal agenda of the New Right (Seidel 1987*b*: 40; see also Barker 1981). Indeed these groups were formed by or included individuals who would become prominent exponents of the discourse in the 1980s, such as Roger Scruton and Margaret Thatcher, the latter continuing to participate in the Scruton's Salisbury Group after becoming prime minister (Seidel 1987*b*: 41). Such facts however, obscure the existence of the discourse of cultural racism– even if it wasn't yet so-called– prior to the late 1970s. Enoch Powell's 1968 "Rivers of Blood" speech, as well as

examinations of parliamentary debates on immigration dating back to the 1950s (Grosvenor 1997), reveal that the main elements of the discourse were present long before they became implicated in the attacks of the 1980s on social equity policies in education.

Indeed, such discursive formations are not limited to the British context, or to the period of the 1980s. They can still be found, though often in more subtle forms, in the press accounts of the findings of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry a decade later. Furthermore, they can be found in other locations in the West, such as the U.S. and Canada. The U.S. educationalist Michael Apple identifies a virtually identical New Right discourse as dominant in American constructions of social equity policies (Apple 1996). Meanwhile in Canada popular attacks on multiculturalism made the best sellers' lists in the 1990s (see for example Bissoondath 1994 and Granatstein 1998), while the fragility of liberal consensus was acted out in Ontario, where some of the most progressive antiracist initiatives in the country were undone by a Conservative provincial government committed to the espousal of anti-egalitarianism, social discipline and authoritarianism (Harney 1996). Bonnett and Carrington's (1996) comparison of the situations and circumstances of antiracism in Canada and Britain, had pointed approvingly to the positive developments in Ontario under the New Democratic Party, contrasting them with the ongoing 'crisis' in Britain, but by the time their article came to press, the 'crisis' had come to Ontario. As demonstrated by the highly publicized events surrounding the temporary closure of Cole Harbour High School in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia in the fall of 1997, Canada's schools also face tensions similar to those which led to the disturbances at Burnage in March of 1987. Like Burnage, Cole Harbour serves a primarily working class community divided along racialized lines. Tensions in the school had been deemed serious enough to warrant an investigation which

produced a report filled with recommendations similar to those of the Burnage Report. But these recommendation were shelved just prior to the beginning of the school year due to lack of funding. Two weeks into the school year Cole Harbour High was the scene of such violence that the school had to be closed. It did not re-open for two weeks and only then after armed guards were hired and an elaborate system of video surveillance had been installed through out the school (see *Macleans*, 20 October 97; and Saunders, 1999).

Twenty years ago Stuart Hall wrote of the urgent need for the construction of “an anti-racist common sense” to oppose and displace the prevailing ‘common sense’ underpinnings of racism. The task, as he saw it, was to make “anti-racist ideas popular” and to engage with “the great body of common sense, in the population as a whole” in order to “build up an anti-racist popular bloc” (Hall 1981: 28). Crucial to such an enterprise, according to Hall, was the opening up of debate among those committed to antiracism and the development of better analyses of how racist ideologies become popular, with an emphasis on the role played by the mass media in the production of ideologies and its potential for their transformation (Hall 1981: 29-31). In spite of efforts in this direction in the 1980s, such as the work of movements like the Campaign Against Racism in the Media (CARM) (Hall 1981 and Cohen and Gardner 1982) and Rock Against Racism (Gilroy 1987) in Britain, or the attempts of France’s SOS Racisme to export its grassroots, youth-oriented movement to Britain and Canada, the effort to employ the media in the construction of a popular antiracist consensus has been largely unsuccessful. Instead, particularly over the last decade, we have witnessed the muting of public discussion about racism, a backlash against even minimal antiracist policies and interventions, and the re-inscription of a common sense concept of ‘race’ as a reified and viable social category.

Clearly there is an urgent need for racism to be addressed in schools. Yet it would seem that in order to win support for policy and curricular interventions, there is a similarly urgent need to understand the ways in which the media serves to publicize the dominant and prevailing social discourses— at the expense of alternative and subordinate views— which constantly undermine the claims, the evidence, and especially the voices and the experiences on which the need for interventions are based.

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